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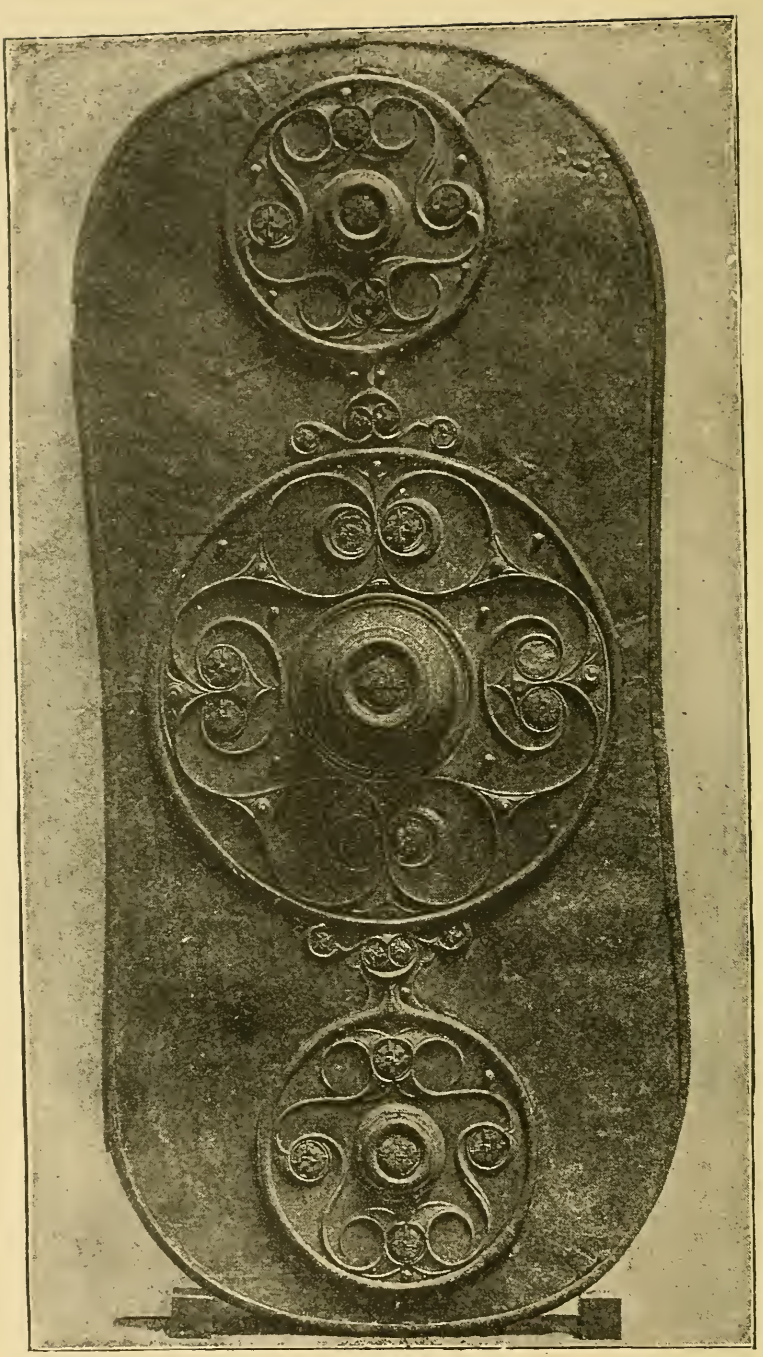

BRONZE SHIELD—LATE CELTIC WORK. FOUND IN THE THAMES AT BATTERSEA.

(*From the original in the British Museum.*)

The Story of the Nations

L 6.267

THE STORY OF EARLY BRITAIN

BY

ALFRED J. CHURCH, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "STORIES FROM HOMER," "CARTHAGE," "THE COUNT OF THE SAXON SHORE," "THE THREE GREEK CHILDREN," "TO THE LIONS," ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

I DESIRE to make a most grateful acknowledgment of the assistance which I have received in writing this book from the "Norman Conquest" of Professor Freeman and from Mr. J. R. Green's "Short History of England" and "The Making of England." From time to time in the course of these pages special references are made to these works ; but these references express but a small part of my obligations to them.

I have also consulted with great advantage to myself the "History of England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings" of Dr. Lappenburg, and Sharon Turner's "History of the Anglo-Saxons" ; the "Dictionary of English History," edited by Messrs. Low and Pulling (Cassell and Co.) ; the "Dictionary of National Biography" ; Dr. Collingwood Bruce's "Roman Wall" ; and several of the volumes included in the Rolls Series.

For one or two incidents in the story there is, as far as I am aware, no other authority than the Pseudo-Ingulphus. The Charters given in the "Description of Croyland Abbey" are unquestion-

ably forgeries; but the narrative, which embodies genuine records and traditions, need not therefore be wholly discredited.

I do not know whether it is necessary to vindicate the propriety of my title. This island may have ceased to be properly called "Britain" after the middle of the fifth century; but it certainly could not be called "England" before that time. To the writers and readers of Latin it was always "Britannia," and it is still formally known as "Britain" to the rest of the world.

A. J. CHURCH.

BARNET,
August, 1889.

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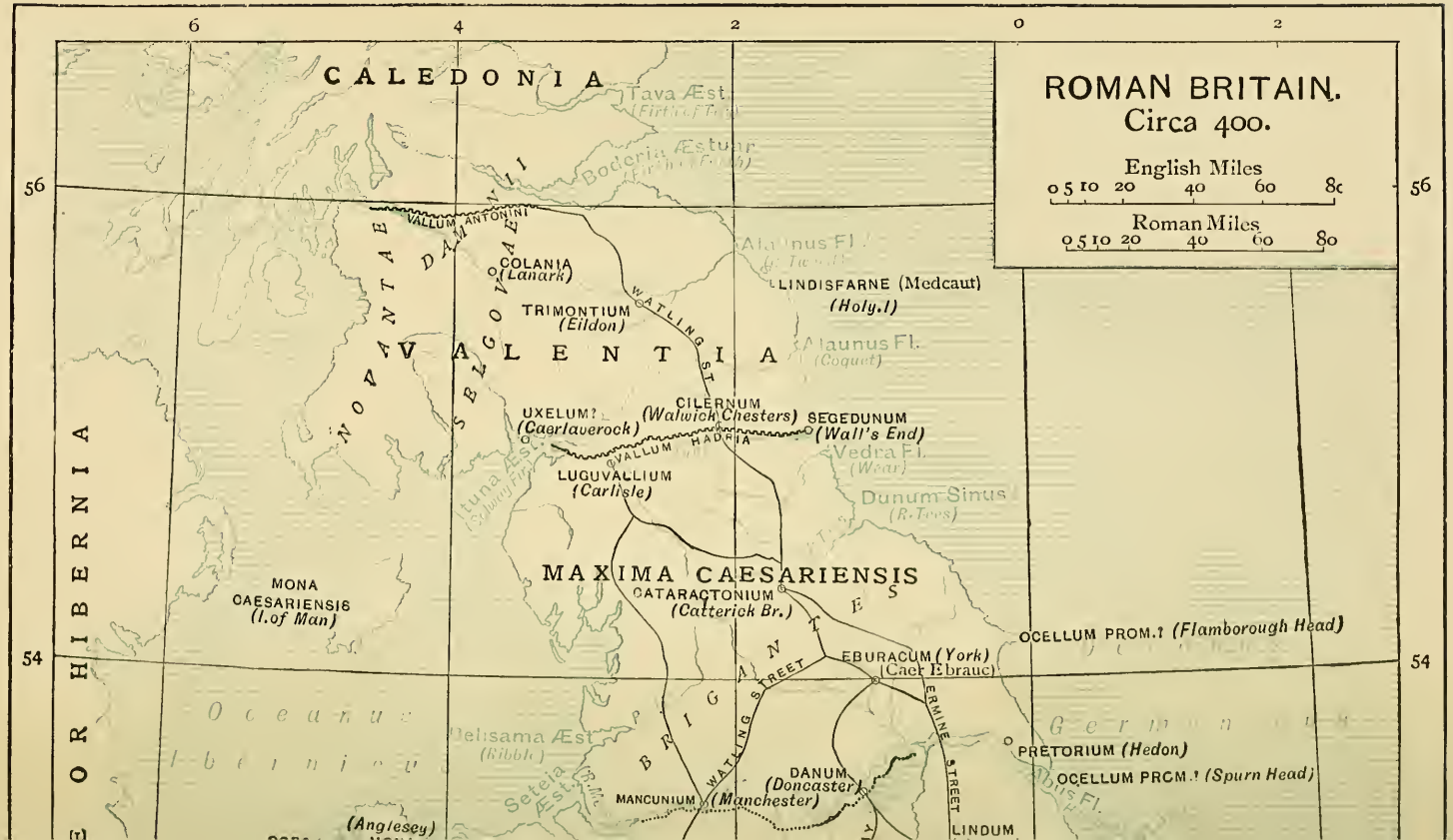
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Tava Æst.
Boderia Æstuar
VALLUM ANTONINI
COLANIA (Lanark)
TRIMONTIUM (Eildon)
WATLING ST.
NOVANTAE
DAMNII
SELGOVAE
VALENTIA
Alaunus Fl.
LINDISFARNE (Medcaut) (Holy.I)
Alaunus Fl. (Coquet)
CILURNUM (Walwick Chesters)
SEGEDUNUM (Wall's End)
UXELUM? (Caerlaverock)
VALLUM HADRIA
Vedra Fl. (Wear)
Tuna Æst. (Solway Firth)
LUGUVALLIUM (Carlisle)
Dunum Sinus (R. Tees)
MAXIMA CAESARIENSIS
MONA CAESARIENSIS (I. of Man)
CATARACTONIUM (Catterick Br.)
OCELLUM PROM.? (Flamborough Head)
EBURACUM (York) (Caer Ebrauc)
IBERNIA
Oceanus Iberni
Belisama Æst. (Ribble)
BRIGANTES
WATLING STREET
ERMINE STREET
PRETORIUM (Hedon)
OCELLUM PROM.? (Spurn Head)
Germanicus Fl.
DANUM (Doncaster)
MANCUNIUM (Manchester)
LINDUM
(Anglesey)

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I.

BRITAIN BEFORE THE ROMANS.

SOMETIME in the fourth century B.C. Pytheas, a native of Massilia (Marseilles) visited the island of Britain.[1] He travelled over a considerable part of it, and found that it consisted, for the most part, of forest or marsh. But there were open spaces in the woods in which sheep and cattle were kept, and there was a strip of land along the coast, or, at least, part of the coast, in which the traveller saw wheat growing. "This wheat," the traveller says, "the natives threshed, not on open floors, but in barns, because they had so little sunshine and so much rain." As he went further north he found that corn could not be grown. The natives made intoxicating drinks, he tells us, out of corn and honey.

The island was inhabited, probably at this time,

[1] What is here said of Pytheas and his account of his travels must be taken with a certain reserve. His work has been lost, and all that we know of it is derived from quotations made from it by writers who did not attach much credit to it. But on more than one point where they criticized him, we know that he was right and they were wrong. Sir E. H. Bunbury ("History of Ancient Geography," i. 590 *seq.*) discusses the question fully, and is inclined to regard Pytheas as, in the main, a trustworthy writer.

and certainly afterwards when we reach the historical period, by two races of men. Tacitus, writing about the end of the first century of our era, says that the physical character of the inhabitants of Britain differs much. One part of them—he speaks of these under the name of Silures—had dark complexions, and, for the most part, curly hair. These he identified with the Iberians, or inhabitants of Spain. The other part, he says, resembled the Gauls. They had red hair, and were tall of stature.

Cæsar, of whom we shall hear more in the following chapters, writing about a century and a half before Tacitus, gives testimony to much the same effect—that the interior of Britain was inhabited by a race which considered itself to be indigenous, the sea-coast by another people which, in search of adventure or booty, had crossed over from Belgic Gaul. This people, he tells us, still retained the names by which its various tribes were known on the mainland.

So far we may consider ourselves to be on firm ground. When we attempt to advance further we find ourselves at a loss. Who were these Iberians and Gauls?

Some would identify the Iberians with the race still found in the extreme north of Europe, and known by the names of Lapps and Finns. This theory may, with little or no hesitation, be set aside. It is more reasonable to see their kindred in the Bretons, occupying the extreme north-west of France, and the Basques of Northern Spain, two populations which still represent the Aquitani, the third of three races into which Cæsar divides the inhabitants of ancient

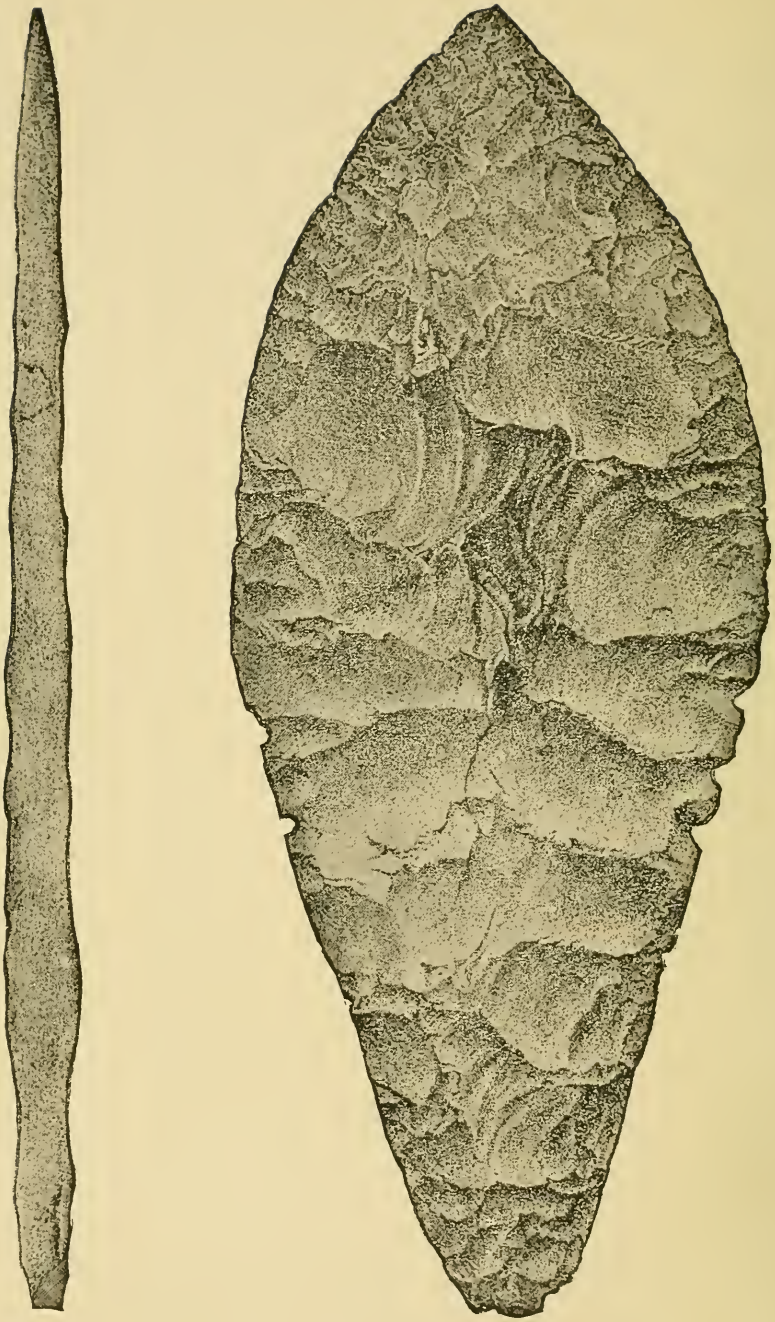
Gaul.[1] The Gauls of Britain, on the other hand, are identified beyond all doubt with the Gauls of the Continent, and with the Belgic stock of this people.

It is a well-known fact that in the ancient British burial-places—burial-places dating from before the time of the Roman invasion—two very distinct types of skull are found, one being broad and the other long.[2] The same observation has been made of remains of the same date in France. It has been further inferred from the character of the weapons and articles of domestic use found in these graves, that the long-headed men were the ruder race. And it has been suggested that the short-headed men, with their superior weapons, drove out the earlier occupants, this dispossession being the movement spoken of by Cæsar when he says that the Belgian Gauls crossed over from the mainland and occupied the maritime parts of the island. There is a tempting neatness in the hypothesis that the long-headed Britons were Iberians, the short-headed Belgian Celts. But facts do not exactly harmonize with this theory. As Professor Huxley remarks, "the extremes of long- and short-headedness are to be met with among the fair[3] inhabitants of Germany and of Scandinavia at the present day—the South-western Germans and the Swiss being markedly broad-headed, while the Scandinavians are as predominantly long-headed." Happily the subject may be left with this statement.

[1] The three are Belgians, Celts, and Aquitani.

[2] The two types are known by the names of Brachycephalic and Dolichocephalic.

[3] According to the theory all the fair, *i.e.*, non-Iberian people, ought to be short-headed.



NEOLITHIC SPEAR-HEAD OR CELT.

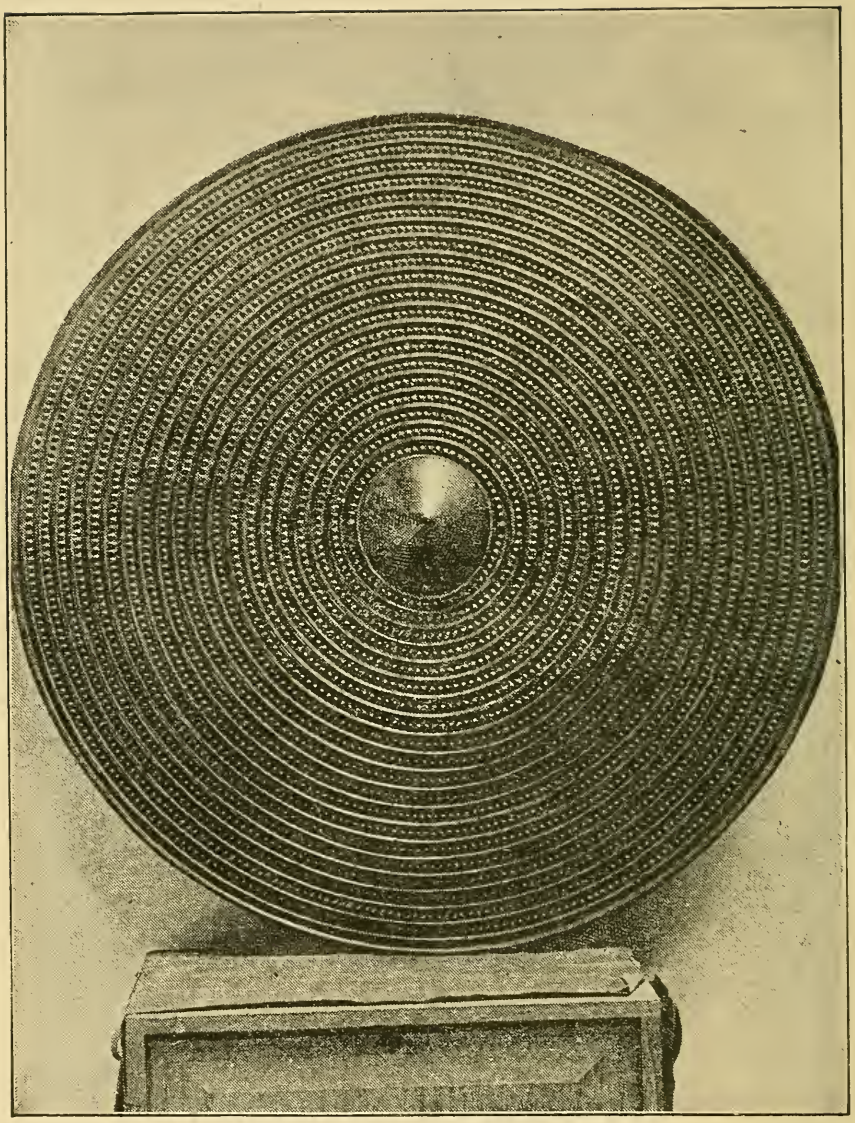
Found near Chelmsford, Essex. (*Front and Side View.*)

(*From "Transactions of the Essex Field Club."*)

It does not fall within the province of one who writes the *story* of a country to deal with the prehistoric.

We may pass on to other information that Cæsar has to give us about the inhabitants of Britain. After giving his view of their origin, he goes on, "The population is numerous beyond all counting, and very numerous also the houses. These closely resemble the houses of the Gauls. They have great numbers of cattle. They use copper or copper coin or bars of iron, carefully made to a certain weight, as money. Tin is found in the inland parts ; iron near the coast, but the quantity of this is but small. They have timber of all the kinds found in Gaul except the fir and the beech. They hold it unlawful to eat hare, chicken, or goose. Still they rear these animals for the sake of amusement. . . . Of all the Britons those that inhabit Kent are by far the most civilized (Kent is a wholly maritime region). These, indeed, differ but little from the Gauls in habits of life. Many of the inland Britons do not grow corn, but live on milk and flesh, and are clothed in skins. All the Britons stain their persons with a dye that produces a blue colour. This gives them a more terrible aspect in battle. They wear their hair long, shaving all the body except the head and upper lip. Ten or twelve men have their wives in common ; brothers very commonly with brothers, and parents with children. The offspring of each wife is reckoned to belong to the husband who first married her."

The iron found "near the sea-coast" probably came from the iron fields of Sussex, which were worked down to the end of the seventeenth century, when



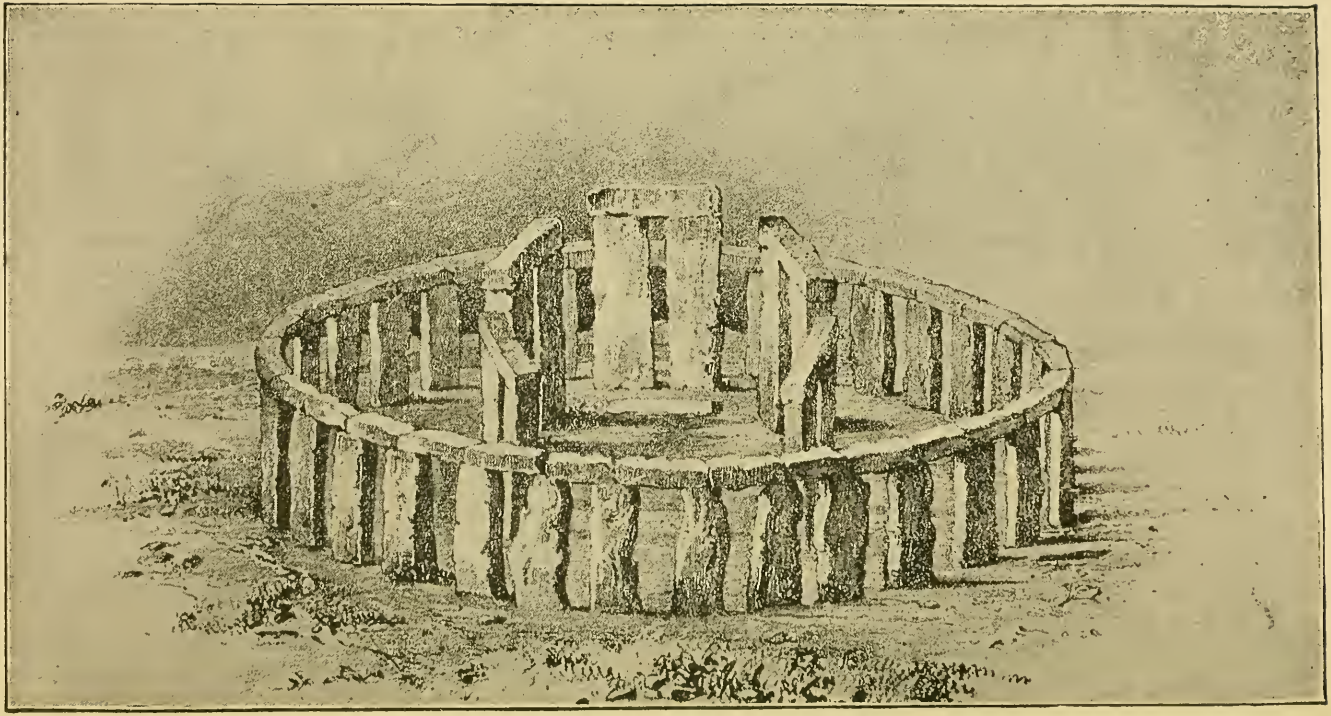
SHIELD OF THE BRONZE AGE.

Found in a turbary called Rhyd-y-gorse, Aberystwith.
(From the original in the British Museum.)

they ceased to be profitable, owing to the greater facilities for smelting afforded by the coal-fields of the midland and northern counties. The tin had long been worked in Cornwall, and exported thence to the Continent. The Cassiterides, or Tin Islands, is probably a name given by people unacquainted with the true geography of Britain to this region. Tin was exported from it as early as the fifth century B.C., for Herodotus (484–407) speaks of the "Cassiterides from which tin comes to us," though he disclaims all knowledge of them.

That the Britons were governed by kings, one or other of whom, from time to time, acquired more or less authority over the others, we may learn from Cæsar. The same writer tells that they had a powerful priesthood, which bore the name of the Druids. His account of this class is as follows :—

"They are concerned with religious matters, perform sacrifices offered by the State and by private individuals, and interpret omens. Many of the youth resort to them for education, and they are held in high honour by the Gauls. They have the decision in nearly all the disputes that arise between States and individuals ; if any crime has been committed, if any person has been killed, if there is any dispute about an inheritance or a boundary, it is the Druids who give judgment ; it is they who settle the rewards and punishments. Any private person or any tribe refusing to abide by their decision is excluded from the sacrifice. This is the heaviest punishment that can be inflicted ; for those so excluded are reckoned to belong to the godless and



VIEW OF STONEHENGE.

(*Restoration.*)

wicked. All persons leave their company, avoid their presence and speech, lest they should be involved in some of the ill-consequences of their situation. They can get no redress for injury, and they are ineligible to any post of honour. The Druids have a president, who exercises supreme authority among them. On his death the next highest to him in rank succeeds. If there are several who are equal, one is chosen by a general vote. Sometimes there is a conflict about the succession. . . . The system of the Druids is supposed to have been invented in Britain, and to have been introduced from that country into Gaul. To this day those who are anxious to make themselves more completely acquainted with it frequently visit the island for the purpose of study. The Druids do not serve in a campaign, and do not pay taxes along with their fellow-countrymen. They are exempted from all civil duties as well as from military service. Privileges so great induce many to submit themselves voluntarily to this education ; many others are sent by their parents and kinsfolk. These pupils are said to learn by heart a vast number of verses. Some, in consequence, remain under teaching for as many as twenty years. The Druids think it unlawful to commit this knowledge of theirs to writing (in secular matters and in public and private business they use Greek characters). This is a practice which they have, I think, adopted for two reasons. They do not wish that their system should become commonly known, or that their pupils, trusting in written documents, should less carefully cultivate their memory ; and, indeed, it does generally happen that those who rely

on written documents are less industrious in learning by heart, and have a weaker memory. The Druids' chief doctrine is that the soul of man does not perish, but passes after death from one person to another. They hold that this is the best of all incitements to courage as banishing the fear of death. They have much also to say about the stars and their motions, about the magnitude of the heavens and the earth, about the constitution of nature, about the power and authority of the immortal gods. And this they communicate to their pupils."

It does not seem likely that the Druidical system really came from Britain into Gaul, if it is the fact that the Celtic inhabitants of the island came from the mainland. It has been suggested [1] that in Cæsar's time the Druid power had become weakened in Gaul, where the system of civil government was superseding that of the priests, but that in Britain, as being a less civilized country, it still retained its old predominance. The stone circles, of which Stonehenge is the most famous and perfect example, but which are found scattered over Great Britain and North-western France, are commonly supposed to have been seats of Druid worship. The word *Druid* is generally referred to the Greek word for an oak (δρύς)

[1] By Mr. C. Long in his edition of Cæsar, "De Bello Gallico."

STONEHENGE—PRESENT STATE.

(From a Photograph by Messrs. Poulton.)

II.

CÆSAR IN BRITAIN.

IN the year 55 B.C. Caius Julius Cæsar, who had been appointed four years before to a five years' command in Gaul,[1] had conquered the whole of that country. The conquest, indeed, was not as complete as he seems to have imagined. Again and again the people rose against him, and five years more of fighting were required before the work could be said to have been thoroughly done. Still towards the end of the campaigning season in 55 he had carried his arms as far as the Ocean on the west, the Channel on the north, and the Rhine on the east. He had even crossed the Rhine, and ravaged the territory of certain German tribes beyond it. Then, after the manner of conquerors, he looked about for fresh enterprises in which to employ his troops, and it occurred to him to invade the neighbouring island of Britain. One of

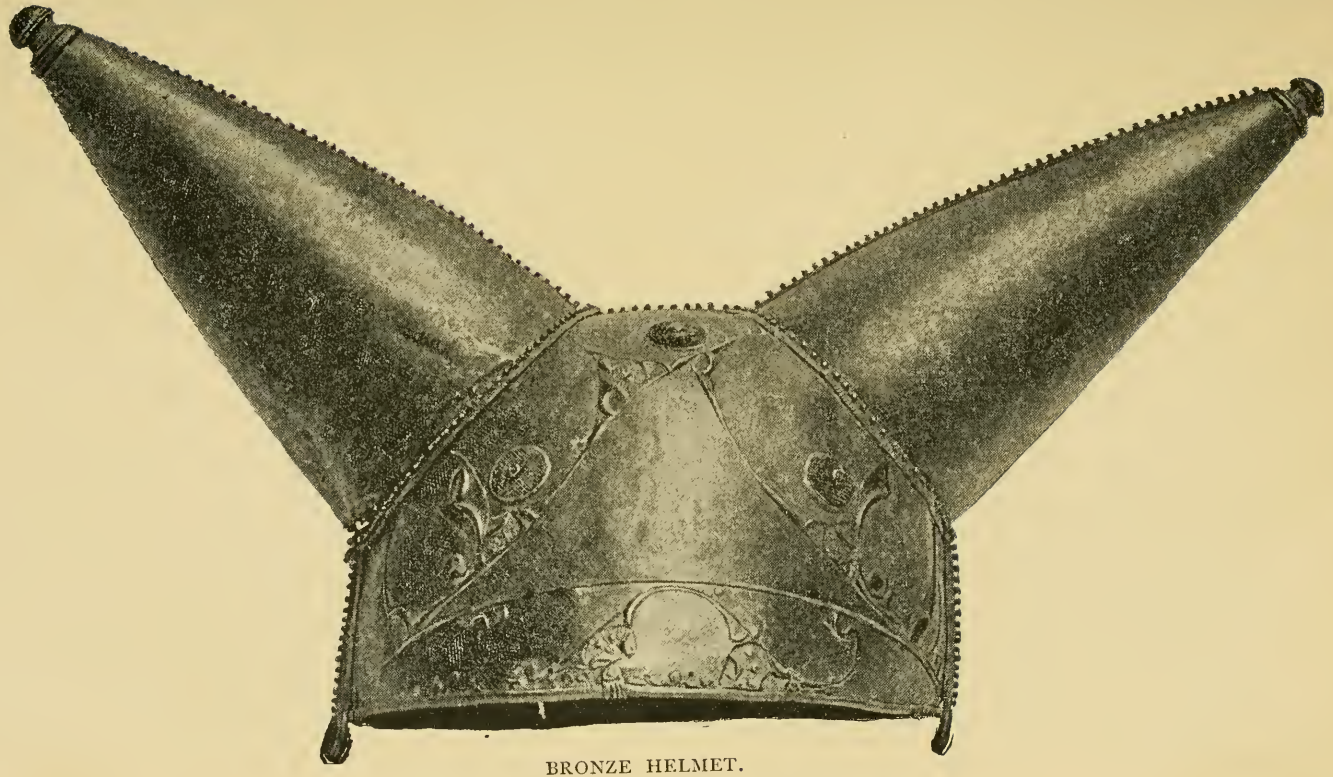
[1] This command was voted, as the result of a political compact, in 59. In the following year Cæsar left Rome for his province, which included Illyricum and the two divisions of Gaul (south and north of the Alps). Illyricum and Cisalpine Gaul were already Roman provinces, as was also, in Transalpine Gaul, the region known as the *Provincia*, South-eastern France, reaching northwards as far as the Cevennes, and westward to the Upper Garonne.

his reasons, as he states it himself in his Commentaries (*i.e.*, Notes on his Campaigns), was that he had found that the natives of Britain were in the habit of assisting the Gaul in their resistance to his armies. It may, however, be doubted whether this consideration weighed much with him. With the Channel commanded, as it was, by Roman fleets, the Britons could have given but very little help to their neighbours across the sea. The summer was nearly over, but he thought that there would be time for what may be called a *reconnaissance* in force. Information about the island, its population, harbours, &c., which he had hitherto tried in vain to get, might thus be acquired, and would be useful in case he should see fit to make afterwards a more regular expedition. His first step was to send one Volusenus to reconnoitre the country. While he was awaiting his return, envoys arrived from several of the British tribes offering submission. He received them courteously, encouraged them to persevere in their good resolutions, and sent them back, in company with one Commius, a friendly Gaul, with the message that he should soon come in person to receive the submission of their countrymen. In four days' time Volusenus came back, having learnt, as Cæsar sarcastically remarks, as much as was possible for one who had never ventured to leave his ship. Meanwhile Cæsar had been busy preparing the means of transport. Eighty merchant ships were collected. These, with such ships of war as he had at command, would, he judged, be sufficient to carry across his army. But he had also eighteen other vessels, which were set apart for the transport of the

cavalry. The force which he proposed to employ consisted of two legions.

He set sail on the 27th of August, about three o'clock in the morning. At ten o'clock he sighted land, probably somewhere near Dover. The coast, he observed, was lined with armed forces of natives, and the "hills" (by which, doubtless, he means cliffs) were so near to the sea, that a javelin could easily be thrown from them on to the shore. The place therefore seemed unsuitable for landing. Accordingly he cast anchor, and waited till three o'clock in the afternoon for the rest of the fleet to come up. Meanwhile the higher officers were summoned to meet on his ship, and received instructions for their conduct of the landing of the troops. When all stragglers had come up, he gave the signal to weigh anchor, and having wind and tide in his favour, moved seven miles northward, probably to the neighbourhood of Deal, where the shore was level.

As soon as the Roman ships began to move, the Britons followed them along the coast, the cavalry and chariots galloping on in advance. The landing was not effected without great difficulty. The ships drew so much water that they could not come very near to the land, and the soldiers, heavily weighted as they were with their arms and armour, had to jump off into deep water, get what footing they could among the breakers, and so make their way to land. The enemy, on the other hand, either standing on dry ground, or advancing a little way into the water, harassed them with showers of missiles. It is not to be wondered at that, under these circumstances, the



BRONZE HELMET.

(From the original in the British Museum.)

Roman legionaries did not show quite as much alacrity and "dash" as they were accustomed to display in battles on land. Their general did what he could to help and encourage them. He detached the ships of war from the rest of the fleet, and used them to make a diversion on the flank of the enemy. Their decks were manned with slingers and archers, and there were also catapults of the light, movable kind. A sharp fire was kept up on the Britons, who began to retreat out of range, and left clear the approach to the shore. Still the difficulty of the deep water remained. While the soldiers were hesitating to jump, the officer who carried the eagle of the tenth legion set them the example. After a brief prayer that his act might turn out well for the legion, he cried with a loud voice, "Leap down, men, unless you wish to betray your eagle to the enemy; I shall certainly have done my duty to my country and my general." The same moment he leapt boldly into the water, and began to struggle shorewards, holding the eagle in his hands. The soldiers in his ship to a man followed his example, and these again were backed up by the rest of the army.

Still there was a fierce struggle before a landing could be effected. The Romans could scarcely find a footing. As for keeping their ranks or following their standards, it was impossible. The enemy, on the other hand, who not only had the stronger position, but also knew the ground thoroughly, attacked them with every advantage on their side. Nevertheless their resistance was ineffectual. Cæsar manned the boats belonging to the ships of war, and sent them

to give help at any spot where he observed his troops in danger of being overpowered. When once dry land was gained, the day, of course, was won. Indeed, the Britons at once took to flight, and Cæsar laments that for lack of cavalry he could not pursue them. "This was the one thing," he says, speaking, according to custom, in the third person, "that was wanting to Cæsar's old good fortune."

In the course of a day or two the Britons sent envoys to negotiate for peace, and with the envoys came Commius the Gaul. He had been roughly treated and imprisoned, and had not been released till after the Roman victory. The envoys threw the blame of this violation of law upon the common people, whom they sought to excuse by pleading their ignorance. Cæsar professed himself ready to overlook the offence, while he demanded hostages for their good behaviour in the future. Some of these were at once handed over to him; the rest, it was explained, belonged to distant parts of the country, and a few days must pass before they could be brought.

On the 30th of August the ships with the cavalry on board hove in sight. But when they were within a short distance of the shore, the weather suddenly changed. Some were driven back to the port from which they had sailed, others were carried along the coast for some distance to the westward. Here they attempted to anchor, but the sea was too rough, and they were compelled to return to Gaul.

The same night another disaster happened to the expedition. It was the time of the full moon, and,

consequently, of the spring tides. About spring and neap tides, the Romans, accustomed to their own tideless sea, knew nothing, and they had made no preparations. The ships of war, which had been drawn up on land, were filled with water; the merchant ships, which were at anchor, probably without the necessary length of cable, were greatly damaged by the unexpected rise of the tide, accompanied, as it seems to have been, by some rough weather. Many were wrecked, the rest lost much of their tackling, and, for the present, were rendered useless. There was, of course, great consternation in the camp. There were no means, it seemed, of getting back to the continent, while no provision had been made for a stay.

The Britons were quite as much alive to the importance of what had happened as the Romans themselves. Without ships, without cavalry, and without corn, the enemy, they thought, were helpless. They had had time also to estimate their force from the dimensions of the camp. It could not, they knew, be very large, and as the troops had been brought over with but little baggage, and so could be packed closely together, they believed it to be smaller than it really was. The hope sprang up that they might be able to destroy the invading army altogether. To inflict such a blow, they imagined, would be to prevent another invasion of the island for many years to come. Accordingly, the chiefs who had assembled at the camp found pretexts for leaving it, while fresh forces were brought down from the interior to the coast.

Cæsar, though without positive knowledge of what was on foot, had his suspicions. The disaster to the ships would, he knew, raise the hopes of the Britons, and he found, at the same time, that no more hostages were brought into the camp. He lost no time in preparing for the two contingencies of retreat, and wintering in the island. Twelve of the ships that had suffered most damage were broken up, and the others were repaired with the metal and timber that were thus made available. The soldiers worked with so good a will that in a few days a sufficiently serviceable fleet was ready.

Meanwhile the work of provisioning the camp had been busily carried on, and, as yet, without hindrance. Everything indeed looked peaceful. The population was at work as usual in the fields, and visitors went in and out of the camp. But one day, when one of the two legions had, according to custom, gone out to collect corn, Cæsar was informed by the pickets that an unusually large cloud of dust could be seen in the direction which the legion had taken. He at once guessed what had happened, and taking with him the cohorts on guard, while he ordered all the other available troops to follow, hastened to the relief of the foragers. He found them beset by the enemy, and in no small danger. The Britons had guessed what direction the foraging party would take. Only one spot remained where the corn had not been reaped, and it was in the woods that adjoined this that they laid their ambuscade. The Romans, suspecting no danger, had piled their arms, and set about the work of reaping, though of course

a part of the legion remained on guard. The Britons attacked the reapers, and killed some of them. When Cæsar came up the legion had formed itself into a solid square. This was surrounded by cavalry and chariots and exposed to a continuous discharge of missiles. The arrival of the relieving force put an end to the attack, and Cæsar did not think it advisable to assume the offensive. The two legions returned to the camp without having suffered any very serious loss.

A continuance of bad weather for several days prevented the Romans from leaving, and the Britons from attacking the camp. The latter, however, were not idle. They sent messengers throughout the neighbouring districts, describing the weakness of the invaders, the magnitude of the booty to be got from them, and the advantage of striking such a blow as would secure for ever the freedom of the island. A large force of cavalry and infantry was thus collected. Cæsar, meanwhile, had received a reinforcement of thirty cavalry, which Commius the Gaul brought with him from the continent. Knowing how useful these would be in pursuit, he resolved to give battle, and drew up his legion in front of the camp. An engagement followed, but the Britons, of course, could not stand up against the discipline and arms of the invaders. The victors pursued the fugitives till their strength was exhausted, and, after burning all the dwellings in the neighbourhood, returned to the camp.

The very same day envoys appeared asking for peace, and this Cæsar was ready enough to grant.

He contented himself with doubling his demand for hostages. He did not, however, intend to wait till they should be brought into the camp, but directed that they should be sent after him to the mainland. He was, in fact, in a great hurry to go. The equinox was near, the weather could not be trusted, and his ships, hastily patched up as they had been, were scarcely seaworthy. Starting at midnight, possibly on the very day of the battle, he had the good fortune to make the passage without encountering any mishap. The expedition probably occupied about three weeks, having been begun on the 27th of August, and brought to an end some time before the 24th of September. Cæsar's narrative seems to be somewhat exaggerated. There could not have been time for the gathering of the great hosts of natives which he describes. It is probable that it was only a small region in South-eastern Britain that concerned itself about his coming. The expedition, too, was certainly not a success. As has been said, he was three weeks in the island, and never advanced as much as a mile from the shore.

III.

CÆSAR IN BRITAIN.

(*SECOND EXPEDITION.*)

CÆSAR'S first invasion of Britain was, as has been said, a mere *reconnaissance;* the second may be described as a serious effort at conquest. Great preparations were made during the winter. Old ships were repaired, and new ones built, the latter being specially adapted for the transport of cargo and horses. The *rendez-vous* for the fleet was the *Portus Itius.*[1] Some delay was caused by the necessity of chastising some tribes which had showed a disposition to rebel; and when these operations were concluded a contrary wind, blowing from the north-west without any intermission for five-and-twenty day, prevented the departure of the fleet. Even at the last moment the flight of an important hostage from the camp caused the start to be postponed.[2] It was not till July 20th that Cæsar set sail. He had more than six hundred ships, and these carried five legions, number-

[1] Probably Issant, near Boulogne; possibly Boulogne itself.

[2] It is worth while to mention, as showing Cæsar's uneasiness about the temper of Gaul, that he took a great number of hostages with him to Britain.

ing, it may be reckoned, with auxiliaries, about thirty thousand effective troops, and two thousand cavalry. The fleet weighed anchor at sunset (which on July 20th would be about eight o'clock). A light wind was blowing from the south-west, the tide, which was ebbing, was running in the opposite direction. At midnight the wind dropped, and the tide began to flow, carrying the fleet to the north-east. At dawn, which would be about three hours after midnight, Britain was seen on the left hand lying to the westward. The fleet had drifted past the North Foreland. The oars were then got out, and, the tide turning again, the ships made for the point where the landing had been effected the year before. The soldiers on board the transports worked, we are told, so hard that their heavy vessels kept up with the ships of war. No attempt was made by the natives to oppose a landing. They seem to have been overawed by the formidable appearance of the fleet, which had been increased by the craft belonging to private owners to more than eight hundred.

Cæsar lost no time in commencing operations. Without even staying to construct a camp he marched with the bulk of his army against the fortified position of the enemy. This was about twelve miles' distant on the banks of the Stour, and is described as having been strongly situated, and well constructed of earthworks and timber. The Romans, however, had little difficulty in taking it. The method of attack was that known as the "tortoise" (*testudo*), and has been thus described :

"The men in each file stood close together, but with

a space of about three feet between the files; excepting, of course, in the front rank, where the formation would be solid. This first rank held their shields in front of them. The other shields were held overhead, the length at right angles to the file. Thus between each two files a protected space, three feet wide, was left, through which the workmen could carry bush and faggot. This being rapidly piled, the soldiers kept mounting, stepping alternately to right and left, as the clear space was filled, and the place where they were standing was needed. Thus in a short time the *testudo* was formed, and the ditch was filled up. Then a rush drove the enemy easily from their works, and the position was taken." [1]

Cæsar did not permit any pursuit to be made, as he wished to fortify his camp without any further delay.

The next day he sent three columns in pursuit of the enemy. These had just come in sight of the Britons when news arrived from the officer in command of the fleet that great damage had been inflicted by a storm the night before. Cæsar at once recalled his troops, and set the men to work repairing the ships. Ultimately these were drawn up on shore and defended by the same fortifications which protected the camp. These works were laborious, and occupied as much as ten days. When they were completed Cæsar returned to the point from which he had been recalled by the bad news about the fleet. Meanwhile a large force of Britons had assembled, under the command of Caswallon (called Cassivelaunus by

[1] Messrs. Allen and Greenough's "Cæsar," note *in loc.*

Cæsar), an inland prince, whom the tribes by common consent had made general-in-chief. The chariots and cavalry attacked the Roman horse, and, though finally repulsed, inflicted severe loss. A second attack, this time made upon the cohorts which were protecting the fortifications of the camp, was for a time successful. The Britons broke through the Roman line, held their own against two cohorts, both composed of first-rate troops, which were sent as a reinforcement, and were compelled to retreat only by the arrival of a much larger force. They were found, indeed, to be formidable enemies. The legionaries, with their heavy armour, were baffled by the quickness of their movements, and the cavalry were perplexed by the ease with which their horsemen changed their tactics, showing themselves equally at home whether they were mounted or on foot. Their numbers, too, seemed inexhaustible, and fresh fighters were already ready to take the places of those that were weary or wounded.

It is probable that the success with which they fought made them so confident that they abandoned their desultory tactics and ventured on something like a pitched battle. Cæsar had sent out a strong force the next day to forage. The Britons attacked it, and ventured to engage the legions themselves when these came up to support their comrades. The result was a disastrous defeat. Many of the native levies were disheartened by the losses sustained, and dispersed. In fact, the Britons never could bring their whole force into the field again.

Cæsar now marched northward to attack Caswallon

in his own territories. To do this it was necessary to cross the Thames. There was but one ford, and that deep and difficult.[1] Cæsar found that the opposite bank was held by a large force of natives, besides being fortified by rows of stakes, one of which was below the water. It was his intention to send over his cavalry in advance, but the impetuosity of the infantry was such that they dashed into the river, made their way across, though the water was so deep that it came up to their necks, and reached the opposite shore as soon as did the horsemen. The Britons could not resist the combined attack of cavalry and infantry, but abandoned their position, and fled.

Caswallon had now learnt by experience that a pitched battle with the Romans was hopeless. Accordingly he disbanded the bulk of his forces and, keeping a force of war chariots with him, watched the march of the enemy. Everything in the way of property was removed from the line of their march. All who ventured to leave the main body for the sake of picking up a little plunder were promptly attacked, so that Cæsar had to issue most stringent orders

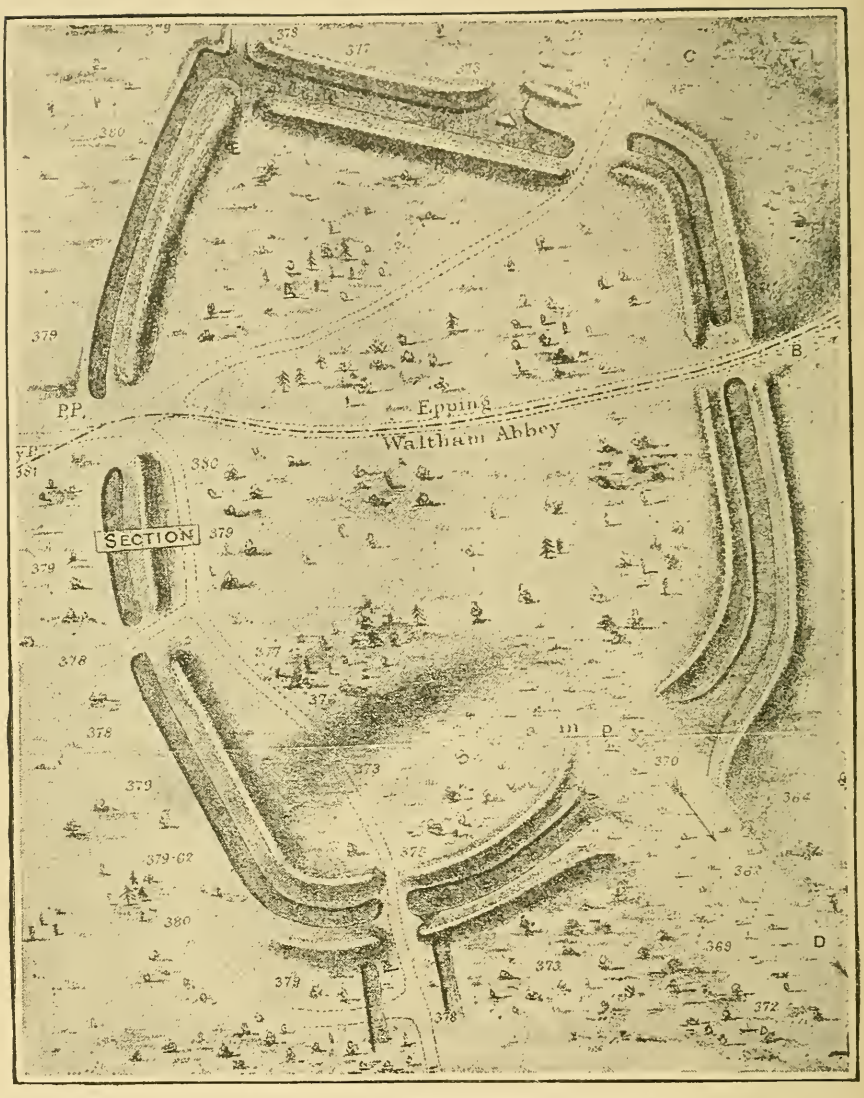
[1] The situation of this ford has been much disputed. Some very ancient stakes have been found in the river near Weybridge, at a place called from them "Coweay Stakes." But these are at right angles to the bank, and rather suggest the idea of a bridge. It is difficult, now that the character of the river has been so changed by the locks which make it navigable, even to guess at the place where the ford may have been. The stream between Bray and Windsor is, or certainly was some years ago, more shallow than in any other place in the lower river, but it has been deepened here, within the present writer's recollection, by the construction of an additional lock.

against all straggling. All that he could do was to inflict as much damage on the country as possible by ravaging and burning along the line of march.

Disunion and jealousy among the British tribes now began to help the invader. Caswallon in former days had waged many wars against his neighbours. He had put to death the king of the Trinobantes (inhabiting Essex and the southern part of Suffolk), and driven the heir to the throne into exile. This tribe now sent envoys to Cæsar, begging for the restoration of the banished prince, and offering their submission. The young man, who was in Cæsar's camp, was immediately sent home, and the tribe was enjoined to furnish forty hostages and a supply of corn. This requisition was immediately obeyed.

The example of the Trinobantes, whose country was now, of course, protected from injury, was followed by other tribes. From some of their envoys Cæsar learnt that the "town" of Caswallon was not far from the place to which he had advanced. A "town" in the British language, Cæsar explains, was nothing more than a piece of forest fortified by a rampart and ditch, by way of protection for themselves and their cattle against sudden attacks. He at once marched to the spot.[1] He found that the position, besides being naturally strong, had been carefully fortified. But the Britons could not resist the assault which was promptly delivered on two sides of their fortress. They evacuated the place, leaving behind them a great quantity of cattle.

[1] The situation of this "town" is doubtful. St. Albans has been suggested as a possible locality.



PLAN OF CAMP AT AMBRESBURY BANKS, EPPING FOREST.

(*Supposed British Town. From "Transactions of the Essex Field Club."*)

Meanwhile Caswallon attempted a diversion by suggesting to the chiefs of Cantium (Kent) an attack on the camp which Cæsar had constructed by the shore. The attack was made, but without success, and the Britons suffered greatly from a sally of the garrison.

The British king now sent envoys to treat for peace, using the good offices of Commius to obtain a hearing from Cæsar. The Roman general was ready enough to listen. He had no desire to stay in the island. He had received disquieting news from Gaul, and the summer was fast passing. (It was now about the middle of September.) He was well aware that the Britons might, if they chose, protract the contest in a very inconvenient way. Accordingly he demanded a number of hostages (insisting, this time, on their being put into his hands at once), fixed the amount of yearly tribute which was to be paid to Rome, and finally enjoined Caswallon not to attack the tribes which had made friends with Rome.

He then marched back to the coast. There he found the damaged ships repaired. Some, however, had been altogether lost, and, as he had a great number of prisoners with him, it would be impossible, he saw, to transport the whole body at once. A part he sent over immediately, and this reached Gaul without any mishap. But when the ships were returning empty only a few reached their destination. Cæsar, however, would not wait. He crowded his troops on board such vessels as he had, and took them across without losing a single ship.

This marvellous good fortune—the Channel four times crossed by large armaments in perfect safety—was the fitting close of a brilliant exploit. Still, as Tacitus says, Cæsar pointed out the country to those that came after him, rather than conquered it.

IV.

BRITAIN AND THE SUCCESSORS OF CÆSAR.

WE may be sure that the tribute promised by King Caswallon was not regularly paid, if it was paid at all. Cæsar had plenty to occupy him during the remainder of his stay in Gaul in consolidating his conquest of that country, and, after he had left it, in making himself master of Rome. Anyhow, no mention of Britain occurs in Roman history till we find the name in the *Marmor Ancyranum* [1] a record of achievements which Augustus caused to be executed towards the end of his reign. The *Marmor* is unfortunately imperfect, but we can gather from it that certain British chiefs paid tribute to Rome. It is likely enough that the Emperor, after he found himself firmly established on the throne, would claim some acknowledgment of his sovereignty, and that the British chiefs would give it rather than incur the risk of another invasion. We may safely reject a statement, doubtfully ascribed to Livy, that Augustus himself landed on the island on the strength of Suetonius's positive assertion that no Roman had ventured thither in the interval (89 years) between the departure of Cæsar and the expedition of

[1] A tablet found at Ancyra (now *Angora*) the Roman capital of Galatia.

Claudius, of which I shall soon have to speak.[1] The policy of Tiberius was to contract rather than to extend the limits of the Empire, and during his reign no attention was paid to a country so remote.[2]

[1] There are occasional allusions to Britain and the Britons in the Augustan poets, and it may be interesting to bring them together. Virgil, in his first Eclogue (B.C. 40), speaks of the Britons, "utterly divided from the rest of the world," as a remote tribe which his exile might visit. (Professor Conington, however, thinks that he regards them as "a Roman province to which settlers might conceivably be sent." This, however, is very doubtful.) In the second Georgic (B.C. 36 ?) they are mentioned as the picturesque, outlandish figures embroidered on the curtain of the theatre. In Tibullus (54–18 B.C.), if the Panegyric on Messalla be his, we hear of the "Britons not yet subdued by Roman arms" as future objects of that general's valour. In Propertius (51–15) they are classed with the Parthians as enemies of Rome. Ovid mentions them with epithets connected with the sea, but says nothing more. The allusions of Horace are more significant. In the seventh epode, probably one of the earliest of his poems, and attributed to the year 40 B.C., we hear of the "unsubdued Briton," mentioned in connection with the Parthians. In Odes i. 21, the poet prays that hunger and pestilence may be warded off from the Roman ruler and his people, and sent to "the Parthians and Britons." In i. 35, Augustus is "about to march against the far-off Britons." In Odes iii. 4, they appear as "the Britons savage to strangers," whom the poet, safe in the protection of the Muses, is to visit. But in the next ode the benignant godhead (*praesens Divus*) of Augustus, is said to be proved by his having added "the Britons and the terrible Parthians to the Empire." The exaggeration seems to be the same in both cases. The Parthians gave back, as a matter of policy or friendship, the spoils which they had taken at the defeat of Crassus. This arrangement the Roman poets describe by such phrases as "tearing down the Roman standards from the Parthian shrines." Strabo, who lived in the reign of Augustus and Tiberius, says of the Britons that "some of their princes sought by embassies and other attentions to conciliate the friendship of Augustus, made offerings in the Capitol, and put their whole island under the protection of Rome." The impression gained from the whole of these references is something like that stated in the text.

[2] The single reference to Britain under the reign of this prince is that the chiefs of the island sent back to Germanicus some of the shipwrecked soldiers (this was in A.D. 16).

Tiberius' successor, Caligula, made a pretence of subduing the island, but the story of his proceedings, as it is told by Suetonius and Dio Cassius, is so ludicrous as to be scarcely credible. It runs thus :—

Caligula, who was unquestionably a madman, conceived a sudden whim of making a campaign against the Germans. While he was in camp he was visited by Adminius, one of the sons of the British King Cunobelin,[1] who had been exiled by his father, and who hoped to be restored by Roman help. Caligula at once sent a boastful despatch to Rome, declaring that the whole island had been surrendered to him. His next fancy was to obtain some material tokens of his conquest. Accordingly he drew up his army, complete with horse, foot, and the artillery of catapults and machines, on the Gallic shore of the Channel. No one could even guess at his intention, when he suddenly gave the order that the soldiers were to fill their helmets and pockets with shells. "These," he said, "are the spoils of the ocean, and are due to the Capitol and the Palatine," whither he accordingly sent them, with directions that they should be laid up among the treasures of the Empire. There was more sense in the erection of a lofty tower on the coast, which was to serve as a lighthouse, as well as to be a local memorial of his victories. These and these only were the results of what Tacitus calls "the absurdity of the expeditions of Caligula." The tranquillity of Britain, however, was not to last much longer. As usual it was a pretender who invited the interference of Rome.

[1] The "Cymbeline" of Shakespeare.

In A.D. 43 one Bericus[1] applied to the Emperor Claudius for help. At the same time his extradition was demanded of Rome by his enemies at home. The Emperor determined to avail himself of the opportunity. The demand of the British envoy for the surrender of the fugitive was refused, and Aulus Plautius, who had been Consul fourteen years before, and then held a command in Gaul, was entrusted with the care of the proposed expedition. Four legions, the Second, the Ninth, the Fourteenth, and the Twentieth, were chosen for this service. The soldiers were exceedingly unwilling to go. Britain seemed to them to lie beyond the boundaries of the world, and they positively refused to proceed. Claudius sent his freedman Narcissus to remonstrate with them. Narcissus mounted the tribunal, and sought to address the troops. But they interrupted him with cries of *Io Saturnalia !* They meant that it was no holiday-time when, as during the festival of Saturn in December, a slave might play the part of a master. After this, however, they returned to their obedience. The force, which, as the legions now had numerous auxiliaries attached to them, may be reckoned at about forty thousand, was divided into three parts. The passage across the Channel was long and difficult, the transports being more than once driven back by adverse winds ; but the landing was effected without any opposition from the natives. The arrival of the army, we are told, was unexpected ; but we have seen

[1] We have no information as to who this Bericus was, but the name "Veric" appears on some British coins, and it is probable that, as Dean Merivale suggests, that the two may be the same.

before, in the second expedition of Cæsar, that the Britons did not feel themselves able to resist the landing of a really powerful force.

King Cunobelin had died in the interval between 46 and 43, and his power was divided between his sons, Caractacus (Caradoc) and Togidumnus. These princes, who were in command of the united British force, were successively defeated by Plautius in the marshes and forests to which they had retired. The account of the campaign now becomes very obscure. Plautius received the submission of part of the tribe of the "Boduni," supposed to be the same as the Dobuni who inhabited what is now known as Gloucestershire. This seems difficult to believe, and it is impossible to identify the river mentioned as that which Plautius reached, after passing through the country of the Dobuni, with the Severn. Possibly the Medway may be meant. Whatever was the river in question, the Romans crossed it unexpectedly, thanks to the skill of the Batavian cavalry in swimming. The enemy abandoned their position, and an officer, who afterwards became famous, Vespasian, was sent in pursuit of them. The Britons fell back upon the Thames. Crossing it themselves somewhere in its course between London and the sea, they awaited the invaders in the confidence that this obstacle at least would prove too formidable for the enemy. The Batavian cavalry again showed their skill and courage, while other troops crossed the river "a little further up by means of bridges," a statement which we must interpret, it would seem, of London, as the Thames has never been bridged below that point. Here, how-

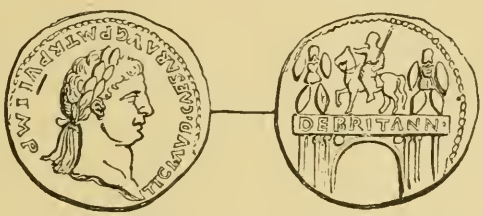
ever, a reverse was suffered. The pursuit of the flying Britons was pushed too far ; the Romans were entangled in what are now known as the Essex Marshes, and lost many of their number.

Togidumnus had been slain in one of these engagements. The Britons, however, showed no disposition to submit, and Plautius felt, or pretended to feel, some doubt as to the result. He sent, as he had been instructed to send, should any emergency arise, for Claudius himself. The Emperor started from Rome without delay as soon as the summons reached him. The forces which he was to take with him were in readiness, and included a troop of war elephants. He sailed from Ostia to Marseilles, traversed the length of Gaul overland or by navigable rivers, crossed over to Britain, and effected a junction with the army of Plautius, which was awaiting his arrival on the banks of the Thames. Suetonius declares that the Emperor fought no battle, and, indeed, saw no blood shed ; but Suetonius is always disposed to depreciate the Julian or hereditary emperors, and it is safer to take Dio Cassius as our authority. Dio relates that Claudius crossed the Thames with the combined forces, vanquished the Britons, who had gathered a great force to resist him, and captured Camalodunum,[1] the capital town of Cunobelin and his dynasty. The neighbouring tribes gave in their submission, and Claudius within a few days returned to Rome (from which he was absent scarcely six months), and celebrated his

[1] Camalodunum may be identified with the modern Colchester, *i.e.*, Coloniacastra. But it must be remembered that a British *oppidum* was an extensive enclosure, large enough to contain pasture for the cattle which it was intended to protect.

successes by a splendid triumph, the Senate conferring upon him the title of Britannicus.[1] A relic of these honours still remains in the fragment of an inscription, which records how "without any loss he vanquished the kings of Britain."

Whatever successes Claudius may have won, the island was far from being conquered. King Caradoc himself, though he had lost his capital, continued to resist. Vespasian was sent to do battle with him. His exploits were without question considerable, for it was now, as Tacitus puts it, that he was singled out for his destiny as Emperor of Rome; but these have



COIN OF CLAUDIUS.

(*The first occasion on which allusion is made to Britain on the coinage of Rome.*)

been very briefly related, and it is impossible to recover the details. The only incident related by Dio, that on one occasion the general was surrounded by the enemy, and was rescued from them by the daring of his son Titus, must be pronounced a fiction, as Titus could not have been more than six years old. "He fought," says Suetonius, including all his British campaigns, "thirty times with the enemy, subdued two very powerful tribes, and subjugated the Island

[1] This descended to his son, the unhappy lad who was thrust aside by the ambition of his step-mother, the younger Agrippina, to make room for Nero, and was afterwards poisoned by the usurper.

of Vectis (Isle of Wight)." He was therefore engaged in the south and west. As the Regni (inhabiting what is now Sussex) had made terms with the Romans,[1] we may locate the conquests of Vespasian in Hampshire, Dorsetshire, and Wiltshire. One of the two "very powerful tribes" may have been the Durotriges. Prasutagus, king of the Iceni (Norfolk and Suffolk), followed the example of Cogidumnus, and sought the friendship of Rome. He even imitated the flattery or precaution commonly practised by Roman nobles anxious to secure for their families at least a portion of their wealth, and named the Emperor among his legatees. We shall hear more hereafter of the outcome of his dealings with Rome.

In 47 A.D. Plautius was recalled. He was considered to have conducted his campaigns with great judgment, and received special honours from the Emperor. An "ovation," or smaller triumph, was decreed to him, and Claudius walked by his side both as he went to the Capitol and as he returned. He had the satisfaction, if the passage in Dio is genuine, of exhibiting British gladiators in the arena. Ostorius Scapula was sent to succeed him.

[1] "Cogidumnus remained," says Tacitus, "a most faithful ally down to our times." If the historian visited Britain in company with Agricola (see p. 58), he may have seen this prince in extreme old age. Cogidumnus seems, from an inscription found at Chichester, to have assumed the Roman names of Tiberius Claudius.

V.

CARACTACUS.

OSTORIUS SCAPULA found that his predecessor's victories had left him much to do. There had been an interval of inaction between the departure of one commander and the arrival of another, and the Britons had availed themselves of it to invade the country of the tribes friendly to Rome. Though it was very late in the year, Ostorius at once set about the construction of a line of forts, which was to keep the hostile tribes in check. Tacitus, the only authority that we have to follow, is here very obscure. He speaks of the Severn as one of the limits of this line. The other is uncertain ; but it has been guessed to be the Nen. Anyhow the proceedings of Ostorius seems to have offended the Iceni, a powerful people in the east of the island, which had hitherto been friendly. The Iceni were followed into rebellion by several dependent tribes. Ostorius acted with the old Roman energy. The main body of the legions was elsewhere, but he attacked the enemy's camp with his force of cavalry and friendly Britons, and carried it by storm.[1] The besieged were entangled

[1] Tacitus does not give us a hint of where this took place.

in their own defences, and made a desperate resistance ; but the Roman discipline could not be resisted. The last being thus reduced to submission, Ostorius at once marched to the extreme west to attack the Cangi, who are supposed to have inhabited the peninsula of Carnarvonshire. He had nearly reached the "coast which faces Ireland," when he was called north by disturbances among the Brigantes, a powerful people occupying what is now Lancashire and Yorkshire. The Brigantes quieted, he was called southward again by a movement of the Silures under King Caradoc. It is rather puzzling to be told that the Roman general, to keep them in check, founded the colony [1] of Camalodunum (Colchester). A military station in the east could not exercise a very direct influence on a turbulent tribe in the west. Anyhow the general found it necessary to take the field and to march against the Silures. Caradoc did not await the attack in his own country. He did not suppose that his rude levies could be a match for the Roman troops ; but he hoped much from being able to choose the field of battle, and he chose it in the territories of his neighbours on the north, the Ordovices.[2]

The scene of the final conflict it is impossible to

[1] A Roman colony was a military settlement. Lands belonging to the conquered were assigned to soldiers who had served their time with the legions. These veterans seem to have dwelt in the town and to have cultivated ; perhaps permitted the former owners to cultivate on certain conditions the farms which had been made over to them. "The colony," says Tacitus, "was meant to act as a shelter in case of a rebellion, and as a way of teaching the subject people respect for Roman laws." We shall see how Camalodunum fulfilled these duties.

[2] The Ordovices are located in North Wales and the western part of the neighbouring English counties.

identify. Tacitus tells us that the British king chose a place where advance and retreat alike would be difficult for the Romans and comparatively easy for his own men, that this place was on a lofty hill, the easier slopes of which were fortified with ramparts of stone, and that a river of uncertain depth, *i.e.*, it may be conjectured, with no regular ford, flowed in front.[1] The chiefs of the various tribes which had furnished contingents to the army encouraged their men to make a brave struggle for freedom. The king himself hurried from line to line protesting that the result of the day would be either to set Britain free or to fasten its chains for ever. He appealed to the memory of those who a hundred years before had driven back the dictator Cæsar, and to whose valour they owed it that they were still free, and could still call their wives and their children their own. The Britons answered the appeal with wild shouts of applause, and swore by all that was most sacred to them not to give way.

So formidable was the aspect of the enthusiastic multitude of the frowning hill-tops, the rampart, and the river, that Ostorius was inclined to manœuvre. But his troops insisted upon being at once led to the attack. This was a kind of disobedience which Roman generals were not inclined to resist, and Ostorius gave the signal for advance. He had, however, surveyed the ground, and knew where the attack

[1] Dean Merivale gives a doubtful preference to Coxall Knoll, near Lentwardine, on the Teme, among many places for which the distinction of being the scene of the great battle has been claimed. Earthworks are still to be seen upon the hill.

could be most easily and profitably delivered. The river was easily crossed. We have seen the Roman legionaries surmounting much more formidable obstacles. The assailants suffered most when they came to the rampart. For some time they stood exposed to the shower of missiles which the Britons poured upon them. Here the loss in killed and wounded was considerable. But it was not long before they formed a *testudo*,[1] and under its shelter tore down the rude defence of uncemented stones. The Britons could not hold their own in a hand-to-hand struggle with the well-armed legionaries. They retreated to the heights, but both the heavy and the light-armed troops followed them. Both were better equipped for battle than themselves. The skirmishers had artillery of longer range; the legionaries were protected by breast-plates and helmets, and were powerfully armed with swords and javelins of the best temper.[2] Even the light arms of native allies of the enemy were more serviceable than anything that the patriots possessed. Victory did not long remain doubtful. Caradoc's wife and daughter were captured, and his brothers yielded themselves prisoners.

The king himself escaped for a time, and took refuge with Cartismandua, Queen of the Brigantes. She put him in chains, and delivered him to the Romans.

It is impossible to assign to their proper years the various events of the war which came to an end with the capture of Caradoc; but we know that he had

[1] See description of this formation on p. 23.

[2] It is probable that many of the British weapons were of bronze.

held out for eight years against the power of Rome.[1] His fame as a national champion had spread not only over Britain and Gaul, but even into Italy. All were anxious to see this brave chieftain, and none more so than the Emperor himself. Caradoc was sent to Rome, and a great spectacle was made out of the exhibition of the famous prisoner. The populace thronged the Field of Mars; the Prætorians, or household troops, were drawn up in arms in front of their camp, and a tribunal was erected in the midst of the array, with the standard behind, and two thrones in front, on which sat Claudius and the Empress Agrippina. Military etiquette was shocked to see a woman seated before the standards, but Agrippina held herself, not without reason, to be the true ruler of Rome. To this spot the procession made its way. In front came the vassals of the captive king. Behind these were carried the collars of gold and other decorations and spoils which he had himself won in earlier wars from British rivals. Then came his brothers, his daughter and his wife, and, last of all, Caradoc himself. All his companions prostrated themselves on the ground; the king alone stood erect. The speech which he was permitted to deliver has been thus reported by Tacitus, but how much belongs to the historian, how much to the king, it is impossible to determine:

"Had my moderation in prosperity been equal to my noble birth and fortune, I should have entered this city as your friend rather than as your prisoner; and you would not have disclaimed to welcome as

[1] It was in A.D. 43 that Claudius crossed over into Britain, and in 50 that Caradoc was taken prisoner.

TRAJAN'S COLUMN.

(*From a Cast in the South Kensington Museum.*)

an ally a king of illustrious descent who ruled many nations. My present lot is as glorious to you as it is degrading to myself. I had horses, soldiers, arms, and wealth. What wonder if I was loath to part with them! You are indeed determined to rule the whole world; but does it follow that all the world is to welcome servitude? Had I been at once surrendered to your power, neither my fall nor your triumph would have gained their present distinction. Put me to death, and my whole story will be forgotten. Spare me, and your clemency will be remembered for ever."

Claudius, who along with much weakness and vanity, had some generous impulses, pardoned the king and his family. They were not, however, permitted to return to their native country.[1]

[1] According to one historian, Caradoc is said to have exclaimed when he saw the size and magnificence of Rome, "Strange that they who own possessions so many and so splendid should envy us our poor huts!" An interesting conjecture connects the Claudia mentioned by Martial (iv. 13) as a British lady married to one Pudeus with the family of Caractacus. She may have been the "daughter" mentioned as being one of the prisoners. This is not impossible, as Caradoc may have taken the family name of the Emperor, when he settled down to spend the rest of his life as a Roman subject in Italy. The times, however, hardly suit. The daughter, who was a prominent figure in the procession, was probably a grown woman, and in A.D. 60 (and Martial could scarcely have written earlier) would be past the usual age of a Roman bride. It is more probable that she was the daughter of King Cogidubnus, whom we know to have taken the name of Claudius, calling himself Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus. This Claudia becomes still more interesting to us if she can be identified with the Claudia mentioned by St. Paul in 2 Tim. iv. 21, and mentioned along with a Pudens. Dean Alford suggests that this Claudia may have become a Christian through her connection with Pomponia, wife of Aulus Plautius, of whom Tacitus relates that she was accused of having attached herself to some "foreign superstition," and that she lived a "long life of unbroken melancholy," a possible description, from a

The resistance of the Silures was not terminated by the captivity of their king. Whether it was that their despair made them irresistible, or that the Romans were rendered careless by success, it is certain that the Britons won more than one victory. A party that had been sent to fortify positions in the district was attacked with such fury that the camp prefect with eight of his centurions and a number of his best soldiers were killed. Only the prompt arrival of supports saved the force from destruction. Not long after the main Roman army suffered a severe check. A force of foragers was routed by a sudden attack of the Britons, and the cavalry sent to support them were repulsed. Ostorius, who was present in person, brought his light cohorts into action, but without success, and it was only when the heavy armed legions came up that a stand was made. On the whole the result was a British victory. The Silures were, of course, greatly encouraged by this result, and they continued to wage a desultory war with all the more vigour, when Ostorius, impatient at their obstinate resistance, was reported to have declared that the very name of the Silures should perish as completely as that of the Sagambri had perished.[1]

Roman point of view, of the profession of Christianity. Anyhow, Claudia was of British birth, and, if Martial, writing on the occasion of her marriage with Pudens, is to be believed, a very charming young lady.

> "Our Claudia see, true Roman, though she springs
> From a long line of Britain's painted kings;
> Italia's self might claim so fair a face,
> And Athens envy her her matchless grace."

[1] The Sagambri, a German tribe, had been removed bodily by Augustus into Roman territory.

Worn out by the incessant activity of the enemy and by the misconduct of his own officers—two cohorts were lost through the greed of their commanding officers for plunder—Ostorius died. The Britons rejoiced to think that if he had not fallen on the field, the war had certainly brought him to his end.

Ostorius was succeeded by Didius Gallus, who was contented on the whole to maintain the Roman dominion as he had found it. Little of importance took place, but it is to be noticed that the leader of the Britons was now Venutius, the husband of that Queen Cartismandua who had betrayed King Caradoc. Didius Gallus surrendered his government in 57, and was succeeded by another aged officer, Quintus Veranius,[1] who died within a year of his coming into Britain. In the following year Nero, whose jealousy had probably had something to do with the appointment of inefficient commanders, sent one of the best soldiers of the time, Suetonius Paulinus, to take up the command.[2]

The chronology of these successive governors is uncertain, but we may conjecturally state their terms of office as follows :—

Plautius	...	...	...	43–47
Ostorius	...	...	...	47–50
Didius	...	...	...	50–57
Veranius	...	...	...	57–58

[1] Veranius had held office under Caligula forty years before.

[2] "No one," says Tacitus, speaking of a time ten years later, "had in these days a greater military reputation than Suetonius."

VI.

BOADICEA.

No details have been preserved for us of the campaigns which Suetonius Paulinus carried on during the first two years of his government (A.D. 59–60), but we are told in general terms that they were very successful. What we know is, that in his third year he felt that the work of conquest had been so well done that he could venture to attack Mona (the modern Anglesey), the stronghold of Druid worship, and, we may venture to say, of British independence. To do this in safety he must have subjugated the Silures, so long the obstinate enemies of Rome, who would otherwise have threatened his rear. The real danger, of which he seems to have had no foreboding, came, we shall see, from the opposite side of the island.

The legions which he had at his command were four in number—the Second, the Ninth, the Fourteenth, and the Twentieth. Of these the Second was probably stationed in the valleys of the Severn and the Wye, the Ninth among the Iceni, and the Twentieth on the borders of the Brigantes, who were still independent. The Fourteenth was under the

general's immediate command, and having been employed during his campaigns in the west, was now to complete its work by the subjugation of Mona.

The infantry of the legion was ferried over the channel that divides Mona from the mainland in flat-bottomed boats ; the cavalry crossed by fording or swimming.[1] The sight that met their eyes as they approached the land was strange and terrible enough to strike them, hardy soldiers as they were, with astonishment. A vast multitude of armed men lined the shore. Women robed in black, with their long hair streaming dishevelled behind them, ran wildly, torch in hand, among the ranks, while the Druid priests, with their white robes and chaplets of oak, stood lifting their hands to the skies, and pouring out curses upon the invaders. For some moments the assailants halted in dismay, while the Britons showered missiles upon them. Then they recovered themselves. What was there to fear in an army of priests and women? Probably the defenders of Mona had little real strength. Certainly they made but little resistance. The Druids were slaughtered, and their bodies thrown into the flames of their own altars ; the groves, where hideous rites of human sacrifice had been practised, were cut down.

Suetonius was thus employed when tidings reached him of a native rising in the east of the island,

[1] The Menai Straits are now a deep channel where the tide runs rapidly. There is nothing like a ford, and to swim across would be a feat requiring exceptional strength. Tacitus' words—and Tacitus may generally be trusted when he speaks of British matters—are so precise, that we are driven to suppose a great alteration in the character of the channel since his time.

followed by dreadful outrages. The rebellion had been provoked by the greed and wickedness of the Roman officials. Prasutagus, king of the Iceni, hoping to secure for his family at least a portion of his vast wealth, had divided it by will between the Emperor and his two daughters.[1] He was cruelly disappointed. The rapacity of the Romans, which had been kept in check during his life, broke out without restraint on his death. His kingdom was overrun, his very palace plundered. His queen, Boadicea, was cruelly scourged ; his daughters outraged. Nor did his people escape. The nobles were stripped of their property, while the humbler class was harassed by the sudden calling in of money lent on mortgage.[2] The people flew to arms, and were joined by the Trinobantes and other smaller tribes. The first object of their attack was the colony of Camalodunum. The veteran soldiers who were its inhabitants were lawless, oppressive, and cruel. The temple of the deified Claudius, which was its chief building, was regarded with especial dislike by the Britons as a sign of their slavery. A new kind of extortion had been invented in the college of priests that was attached to it. Wealthy natives were elected into it, and found their property wasted in its costly worship. Even the

[1] This was a common practice at Rome. Tacitus tells us that his father-in-law, Agricola, did the same thing, and ridicules the delight which Domitian displayed at the compliment. "His mind was so blinded and perverted by flattery, that he did not know that it is only a bad emperor whom a good father names in his will."

[2] Dio Cassius mentions the name of the philosopher Seneca as thus suddenly demanding the money which he had lent on mortgage. But Dio is very bitter against Seneca, whom he elsewhere accuses of vice and extravagance very inconsistent with his professions.

safety of the place had been neglected. Fortified towns are always inconvenient places of residence, and Camalodunum had been left without walls.

There had been, it was said, warnings of the coming disaster. The image of victory fell to the ground in such a posture that it looked like one that had fled from the enemy and stumbled in his flight. Strange sounds of wailing was heard in the council chamber and the theatre of the colony, and strange sights seen on the shore and in the river. The colonists begged for help from the Procurator, or Civil Governor, of the province. He sent them two hundred men, and these but half armed. The regular garrison of the colony was small. Even then common precautions were not taken. If the non-combatants had been sent away, and the town hastily fortified with a ditch and rampart, it might still have been saved. Neither the one thing nor the other was done. There was no one to take the lead and order vigorous measures, while those who sympathised with the revolt hindered all action. The only strong place in the town was the Temple of Claudius; to this, when the storm of invasion burst upon them, the colonists fled. It held out for two days, and then was taken by storm. Petilius Cerialis, a brilliant soldier, but capable of making great mistakes, hurried up with the Ninth Legion. The victorious Britons turned upon him, and cut his infantry to pieces. Cerialis himself, with his cavalry, contrived to make his way back to his camp, which was probably near the Wash. The Civil Governor, whose rapacity had had much to do with the revolt, escaped

into Gaul, and for the time Eastern Britain was lost to Rome.

The whole province might have been lost also but for the courage of Suetonius. He marched back from Mona with his own legion, the Fourteenth. A part of the Twentieth was withdrawn from its station on the border of the Brigantes to join him, and his force would have been still further increased by the Second from the valley of the Severn but for the cowardice of its commander, who did not venture to leave his camp. Suetonius's original plan had been to make Londinium the base of his operations, but he found himself compelled to change it. The Second Legion had failed him, and the Ninth had been destroyed. He had only one legion and the veterans[1] of another, scarcely ten thousand troops in all. He resolved to leave Londinium to the enemy. It was a populous and wealthy town ; but he was not strong enough to defend it. The prayers and tears of the inhabitants could not move him from his purpose. All that he could do was to allow the able-bodied to accompany his march. Londinium was sacked and destroyed by the insurgents, and Verulamium (St. Albans) met with the same fate. The Britons did not attack the military posts, but wreaked an easier vengeance on the unfortified towns. No quarter was given, no prisoners taken. Men, women, and children were put to death with hideous cruelty. It was the oppressions of years for which vengeance was taken.

[1] Soldiers who had served their time, but remained in the camp as combatants, being free from other duties.

Seventy, one account says eighty, thousand victims perished.

Of the movements of Suetonius after he evacuated London we can only guess. The historian tells us that the place which he chose for the decisive battle had hills on either side and a forest behind. His heavy armed infantry was massed in the centre, the light troops were on either flank, and the cavalry were posted in advance of both wings. The Britons covered the whole plain in front, in number, if Dio is to be believed, a hundred and twenty thousand. So confident were they of victory that their women stood on waggons behind their army to watch the battle.

Boadicea addressed her troops from an artificial mound. Dio speaks of her gigantic stature, her stern features, the fierce glance of her eyes, and the deep tones of her voice. Her hair, of the deepest red, fell in thick luxuriance to her hips; a heavy chain of twisted gold was round her neck. She was clad in a tunic of brightly-coloured tartan, with a thick military cloak buckled over it, and she held a spear in her right hand. We need not reproduce the speech which Dio puts into her mouth. It is just what a rhetorician would have written, a discourse on the blessing of liberty, the curse of slavery, a contrast between British simplicity and Roman luxury, and an attempt to persuade her hearers that their light arms were better than the heavy equipment of the legions. We may be certain that no report of what she really said was preserved.[1] But we can well believe that, as Tacitus

[1] Dio makes her harangue her troops at the beginning of the campaign, and adds a curious incident of her letting loose a hare. The

tells us, she pointed to her own person, scarred with the Roman rods, and to her daughters, who had been so shamefully wronged; that she reminded her countrymen of the successes which they had already won and the vengeance which they had already taken, and assured them that their numbers, if only they remembered that they were men, would make them irresistible.

The speech with which Suetonius encouraged his men has probably come down to us. Words spoken at such a time are not easily forgotten, and there was one among his audience who may well have given his recollection of this as well as of other events of the day to the historian.[1] "Men," he said, pointing to the barbarians, "you see more women than soldiers. Unwarlike, even unarmed, they will give way the moment they see again their conquerors, with those swords and that courage which have routed them already so often. Even when there are many legions, it is a few who really decide the battle. It will enhance your glory, if a small force shall earn for itself the glory of a whole army. Close up your ranks; first discharge your javelins, then with shield and sword complete the work of destruction. The victory once won, everything will be yours." The speech was received with such enthusiasm that Suetonius had no doubt of the result, and his confidence was justified. Once more the discipline and superior arms of the

way in which the animal ran was supposed to give an augury of the future. He then makes her talk of Nitocris and Semiramis and other unlikely persons and things, but apologizes by making her say, "All this we have learnt from the Romans."

[1] See p. 59.

Romans were found irresistible. At first the legion kept its place, contenting itself with discharging its heavy missiles against the crowded ranks of the enemy. Then it advanced in a wedge-like formation, breaking through the hostile line. The light-armed troops followed, and the cavalry charged from either wing. The Britons turned and fled, or would have fled but that the waggons blocked the way. A fearful massacre followed. Not only the combatants, but the women and even the cattle that were harnessed to the waggons were indiscriminately slain. It is said that as many as eighty thousand of the conquered perished, while the victors lost less than a thousand in killed and wounded. The British cause was lost. Boadicea poisoned herself (one account says that she died of disease). The cowardly commander of the Second Legion fell upon his sword when he heard of the glorious victory in which he and his men might have had a share.

Suetonius did not fail to follow up his victory. His army was reinforced from Germany, the Ninth Legion, in particular, having its vacant ranks filled up. He carried fire and sword over the whole country, and reduced it to the utmost distress. Still the Britons held out. Suetonius indeed was unrelenting, and held out no inducement to surrender. Then came dissension among the conquerors. The new Civil Governor differed from the general's policy, and hampered his action. Nero sent one of his freedmen to arrange the dispute. He took sides against Suetonius, who seems to have been recalled about the end of the year (61).

For the next ten years the history of Britain is little more than a blank. Three successive commanders, Petronius Turpilianus (62–65), Trebellius Maximus (65–69), Vettius Bolanus (69–71), were content to protect, as well as they could, the territories already acquired. And indeed the military forces at their disposal seem to have been greatly diminished. The Fourteenth Legion was withdrawn from the island by Nero, and fought on Otho's side at the first battle of Bedriacum.[1] Vitellius had weakened the three other legions by drawing the veterans from their ranks. These troops are named among the forces which fought for him in the second battle of Bedriacum.[2] The troops that were left must have had enough to do. Indeed Tacitus says of them that no troops behaved more blamelessly during the whole of the civil war.[3] Their remote situation had something to do, he thinks, with their good conduct, but it was still more important that frequent campaigns taught them to see their enemies in foreigners, not in their own countrymen. We may thus infer, and indeed we are expressly told, that the island was not quiet. Turpilianus seems to have been inactive ; while Trebellius made himself so odious by his avarice and other vices that he had to fly to the Continent.

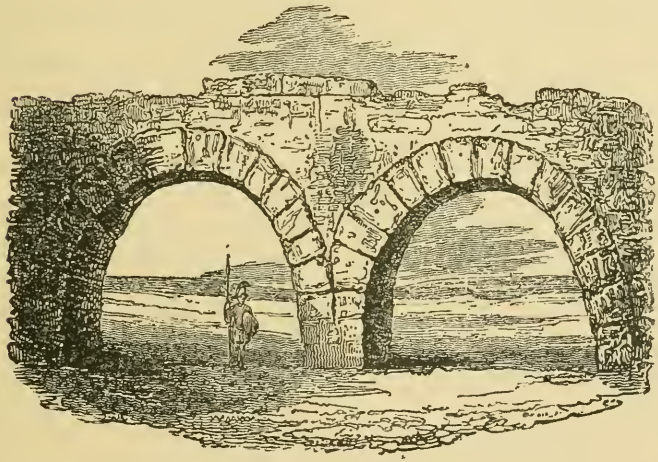
In 71 Vespasian, feeling himself firmly established

[1] The first battle of Bedriacum was fought in 69 between the forces of Otho and Vitellius.

[2] Fought in the same year as the first battle, between the forces of Vitellius and Vespasian.

[3] The war which began with the murder of Galba in January, 69, and ended with the establishment of Vespasian on the throne in the December of the same year.

on the throne, sent Cerialis, a kinsman of his own, of whom we have heard before, to take the command. Cerialis, who, as we shall hear in the next chapter, had an able lieutenant in Cn. Julius Agricola, conquered a considerable portion of the territory of the Brigantes, thus advancing the Roman frontiers considerably to the northward. In 75 he was succeeded by Julius Frontinus, an able general, who found it necessary to re-conquer the Silures. Of the successor of Frontinus I shall speak in the next chapter.

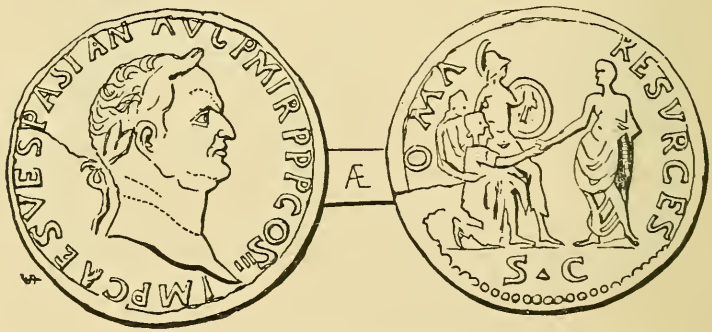


ROMAN GATES OF CHESTER.

VII.

AGRICOLA IN COMMAND.

In A.D. 78, the Emperor Vespasian, who had himself risen to the throne by merit, and who was keen to appreciate it in others, sent Cnaeus Julius Agricola to take charge of the province of Britain. A happier choice could not have been made. Agricola, whose life has been told by his son-in-law, Tacitus the



COIN OF VESPASIAN.

historian, in what is, perhaps, the most beautiful of ancient biographies, was a great soldier, a wise administrator, and a gracious, blameless man. It was in Britain that he had seen his first service, holding the honorary rank of tribune, and acting as

aide-de-camp [1] to Suetonius Paulinus in that general's expedition to Mona and conflict with Boadicea. Ten years afterwards (A.D. 70), he had returned to the island, and had commanded the Twentieth Legion under the Governors Bolanus and Cerialis with great distinction and success. Shortly after the expiration of his term of command he had been appointed to the government of Aquitania ; [2] which he held for between two and three years, winning golden opinions by his moderation and integrity. From this he was recalled to take up the consulship at Rome.[3] In the following year he proceeded, as has been said, to Britain.

He landed in the summer. The Ordovices, a tribe occupying the country now known by the name of North Wales, had almost destroyed a force of auxiliary cavalry stationed in their country. Military affairs in the province seem to have been somewhat disorganized, and it was doubted whether the new commander would immediately avenge this disaster. The summer indeed was over before he was in a position to march. Even then his force was but small. But he acted with vigour and boldness. The Britons kept to their hills,

[1] This word fairly expresses the position of a *contubernalis*, literally a "tent messmate." Young Romans of rank were sent to learn soldiering under some general of repute. They lived in his quarters, and, if they showed any capacity, were employed on staff duties.

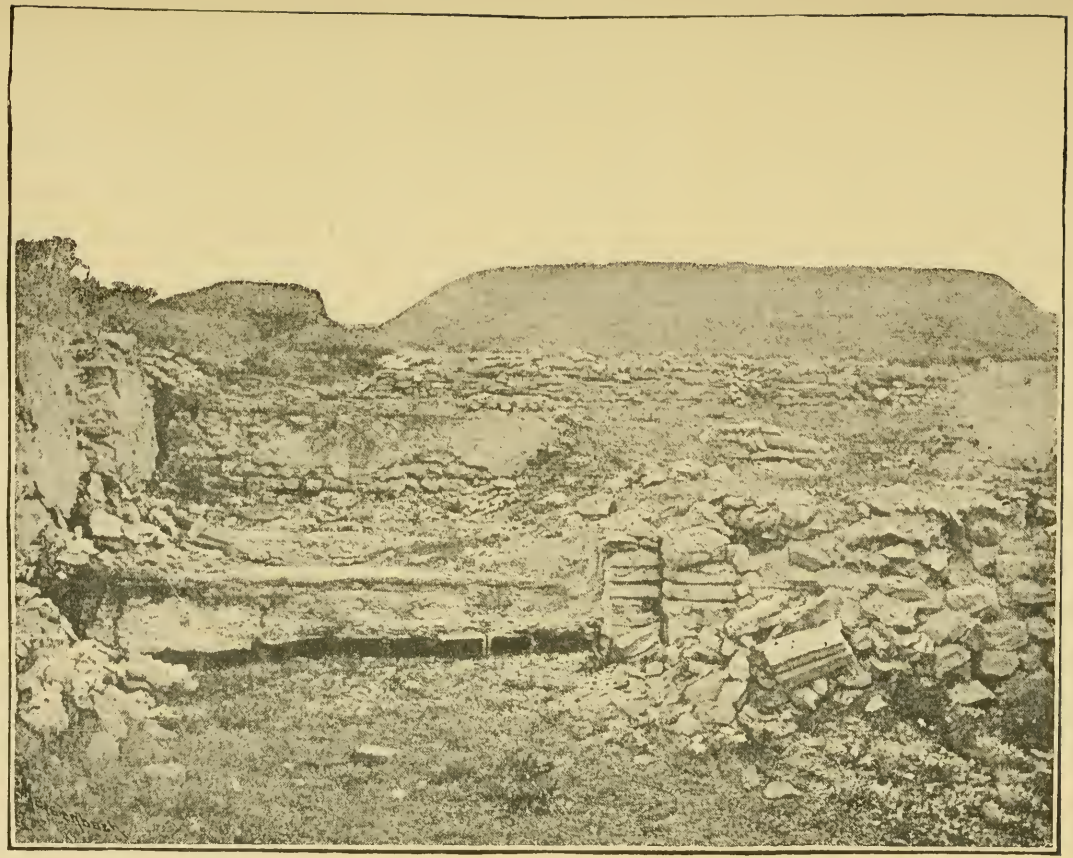
[2] Aquitania was a province of Western Gaul, lying between the Garonne (*Garumna*) and the Loire (*Liger*). The name was corrupted into Guienne.

[3] Agricola appears from the *Fasti Consulares* to have been Consul during the latter half of the year 77, the Emperor Vespasian, who had held the office from the beginning of the year, himself making way for him.

but he attacked them on their own ground, and almost destroyed the whole tribe. He was now in the near neighbourhood of Mona, and resolved to complete the conquest of the island, interrupted eighteen years before.[1] His plans had been matured in haste, and he had no ships in which to transport his army. He did not allow this to stop him. He had in his force some auxiliaries—probably Batavi from the Lower Rhine—who were particularly skilful swimmers. He gave orders to these that they were to enter the water and cross the channel. The natives, who had not imagined that an enemy without boats would venture to attack them, were stupefied by his boldness, and surrendered without making any attempt at resistance.

No special movements of the troops are recorded as having taken place in the following year. Agricola, however, kept his army employed, and continued to complete the conquest of the country already overrun by the Roman arms. But he was chiefly employed in pacifying the conquered people and redressing their grievances. "The experience of his predecessors had taught him," says Tacitus, very probably using his own words, "that little could be done by war, except the causes of hostile feeling were rooted out." The officials employed in the government of the province were put under a severe control. No business of importance was entrusted to freedmen or slaves, and no promotion was given either to civilian or soldier except for merit, while various gross abuses

[1] See p. 49.



SUPPOSED ROMAN BATHS AT SILCHESTER.

(*From a Photograph.*)

from which the subject people suffered were abolished.[1] The Britons were also encouraged to adopt the habits of civilization. Their towns began to be adorned with temples and other public buildings which, to a great degree, were erected at the expense of the treasury. The young nobles were educated in the Roman learning, and showed, says Tacitus (again, we may conjecture, quoting an opinion of his father-in-law), a marked superiority in ability over the Gauls. They were even initiated into the luxuries of the bath and the banquet, and so were taught to reconcile themselves to their subject condition.

The next two summers were spent in extending northwards the limits of the Roman dominion, and in strengthening its hold upon the conquered country. By the end of 81 a line of forts had been constructed between the estuaries of the Forth and the Clyde, and Britain to the south of that line was to all appearance reduced to complete submission.

It may be asked—indeed the historian himself suggests the question—why was not so wise and humane a ruler satisfied with what had been acquired, and content to do his best for conquests already made, without pushing forwards to new. "The glory of our name and the valour of our armies forbade," says Tacitus. Rome, in fact, was driven on by the

[1] The tribute, which was levied in money and wheat, had been made much more burdensome than was necessary by the exactions of the officials. One of their practices was to require the delivery of the specified quantity of corn, not at the most accessible depôt, but at some remote spot to which transport would be very costly. A bribe would be demanded before a more convenient arrangement would be sanctioned.

necessity which never allows a conquering nation to rest. As long as there were neighbours unsubdued, there were always fresh provocations, and fresh reasons, real or imagined, for hostilities. The armies, too, had to be employed. The throne depended upon their good will, and it was an universal experience that the more constantly they were engaged with the enemy, the more quiet and steady was their loyalty.

There was also at work another powerful reason, which, as Tacitus expressly tells us, was present to the mind of Agricola. In the summer of 82 he had sailed across the estuary of the Clyde, and was busy subjugating what is now known as the Mull of Cantyre.[1] There he was visited by a petty prince from Ireland, which now appears for the first time in authentic history. His guest had been driven from his throne by some rival kinsmen, and applied to the Roman commander for help which might enable him to recover it. Agricola was disposed to entertain the application, and kept the banished prince with him for some time in the hope that an opportunity might occur for making him useful. Tacitus continues, "I have often heard him say that Ireland could be conquered and held by a single legion and a moderate contingent of auxiliaries, and that such a conquest would help greatly to consolidate our power in Britain. With the arms of Rome everywhere, freedom would be, so to speak, out of the sight of its people." It

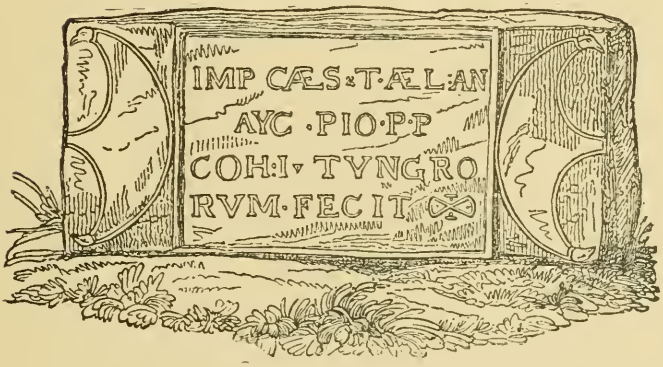
[1] Tacitus' words are, "That part of Britain which looks towards Ireland." This, of course, might be understood of Wigtown, but it seems clear that the country north of the Clyde is intended.

was thus not only the actual power of the free tribes beyond their borders, but the contagious example of their liberty that the conquerors feared. Here are to be found the motives for the long campaigns, so wasteful both of treasure and life, which they fought for the possession of the barren mountains of Northern Scotland.

As my subject is the history of the southern part of the island, I will pass very briefly over the remaining campaigns of Agricola. In 83 he crossed the Forth, as he had crossed the Clyde, and gained some successes, not, however, without meeting with at least one heavy loss in a night attack on one of his legions. In the following summer he pushed further to the northward and westward, till he met the confederated hosts of the Caledonians at a spot now known, it is believed, as Murdoch Moor, near the southern spurs of the Grampians.[1] The Caledonians were commanded by a chieftain whose name is given in the Latinized form of Calgacus. Tacitus puts into his mouth a splendid piece of invective against the tyranny and greed of Rome, while he attributes to Agricola a noble and dignified defence of the empire exercised by his country. A fierce battle occurred, in which the natives displayed a desperate valour, but were unable to make head against the superior arms and discipline of their antagonists, and suffered a total defeat. As many as ten thousand were left dead on the field of battle. The Romans lost three hundred and sixty, among whom there was only one officer of rank.

[1] Murdoch Moor is in Aberfoyle parish in Perthshire.

This great victory brought the career of Agricola to a close. He was recalled by the Emperor Domitian, whose jealousy had been roused by his successes, and left the island before the end of the year (84).



INSCRIPTION FOUND AT CASTLE CARY.

VIII.

THE ROMAN WALLS.

FOR more than thirty years after the recall of Agricola the history of Britain is almost a blank. We know that the successor of Agricola was one Sallustius Lucullus, and that Domitian, in a fit of jealousy, put him to death because he had allowed his own name to be given a new pattern of spear-head.[1] But the most important passage that bears on the subject occurs in Tacitus' brief review of the period between the death of Galba and the death of Domitian. "Britain," he says, "was thoroughly conquered, and immediately left to itself." The "thorough conquest" refers, of course, to the campaign of Agricola. The word which I have translated by "left to itself," has been variously interpreted. Perhaps this phrase is too strong, as "abandoned" certainly would

[1] Suetonius, who tells the story, calls him "*legate* of Britain." *Legatus*, in its strict use, meant an officer who assisted the governor of a province. But Tacitus and other writers of the Empire use it as equivalent to governor, and so I take it in this passage.

be. Tacitus probably does not mean more than that after the vigorous action of Agricola the efforts of Rome slackened, and the new conquests were neglected. An allusion in Juvenal completes our scanty knowledge. One of the Emperor Domitian's flatterers says to him: "You will take prisoner some king, and Arviragus the Briton shall be struck down from his chariot." It would be safe to infer that Arviragus was an enemy of Rome at some time during Domitian's reign, but certainly after the recall of Agricola, *i.e.*, some time between 84 and 96. But we know nothing

COIN OF HADRIAN.

else about him. It is not till the reign of Hadrian (117–138) that Britain really reappears in history.

We find now that Southern Britain, roughly speaking the England of to-day, with which my story is especially concerned,[1] has been thoroughly subjugated. Whatever disturbances occur hereafter in this part of the island until the time when the Romans leave it for good come, not from the native tribes, but from the legions themselves. Works of peace were briskly

[1] But in later times, when Britain becomes England, the Lowlands of Scotland as far as the Firth of Forth are included.

carried on, roads constructed, towns built and enlarged, lands reclaimed from the sea. The main business of the Roman armies was to protect the province from the still unconquered tribes of the north. This was chiefly done by the construction of huge walls across the island at places where its breadth is least.

If we look into the map, we see that one such place is marked almost exactly by the fifty-fifth parallel of

THE ROMAN WALL AT BRUNTON.

N. latitude. The Solway Firth is at the western end; Newcastle-on-Tyne at the eastern. It was here that the first wall was built—an enormous work, exceeding in magnitude anything of the kind that the Romans constructed elsewhere, and so showing the value which they set on the province which it was intended to protect. It must not be supposed, however, that this huge fortification was finished at once. The work of completing and strengthening it seems to have been going

on for more than eighty years, for an inscription has been found, in a quarry which was worked for the stone, that gives the names of the consuls for the year 207.

It was in 120 that the work was begun. In that year the Emperor Hadrian, who had determined to see with his own eyes all the provinces of the Empire, came to Britain. His policy was to contract rather than to extend its boundaries, and he accordingly drew the line of fortification far within the limits to which the Roman conquests had been pushed. It consisted of *five* parts :—A Trench, a Stone Wall,

COIN OF HADRIAN.

Buildings for the Troops, a Rampart of Earth, Roads. In this enumeration, it must be remembered, we begin from the north.

1. *The Trench.* This keeps close to the northern side of the wall, though it has been discontinued where the wall skirts the edge of a cliff. In such places it would have not given any additional strength. Everywhere else it was drawn uninterruptedly, whatever the soil, whether earth or rock. Its dimensions vary. In one place its depth is as much as twenty feet; but here the northern edge has been artificially raised by

earth thrown up from the excavation. Elsewhere it is less than nine. Sometimes it is as much as forty feet broad at the top, and fourteen at the bottom. The average has been given as "thirty-six feet wide and fifteen feet deep."

2. *The Wall.* This was seventy-three miles and a half in length, from Wall's-End in the east to Bowness on the west. It was carefully constructed of stone, great pains having been evidently bestowed on using the most suitable kinds, which have sometimes been brought from a distance. The line which it followed was purposely drawn so as to take in the highest ground.[1] It has naturally suffered more from the effects of time and ravage than the Trench, and, therefore, we are not so certain about its dimensions. The Venerable Bede, who lived at Jarrow, near to its eastern end, says that it was eight feet in breadth and twelve in height. Camden, who saw it in 1599, says, "fifteen feet in height and nine in breadth." A writer about twenty-seven years earlier says, "The height remains in some places yet seven yards," and gives the breadth at three yards. The breadth, of course, is much the same as it was at first. It may be taken, on an average, at eight feet, and perhaps we may put the average height, *as it was*, at eighteen.

3. *Buildings for the Troops.* These are of the three kinds :

a. Camps (*stationes* or *castra stativa*) were constructed at intervals of four miles (on an average) along the line of the wall. They were four-cornered,

[1] The highest point is Winshields, where it is as much as a thousand feet above the level of the sea.

REMAINS OF ROMAN CAMP AT SILCHESTER.
(*From a Photograph.*)

including a space varying from five acres and a half to three-quarters of an acre. Each was fortified with a wall and trench of its own. Commonly the Great Wall serves as the north wall of the camp ; but sometimes the camp has a north wall of its own. These must have been built before the Great Wall, it may be supposed to shelter the troops and workmen who were engaged in the work. Three stand at some distance to the south These may have been forts built by Agricola. Each had four gates, streets crossing each other at right angles, after the fashion of Roman camps, and, it would seem, suburbs for the camp followers. No traces of ornamental building, like the tesselated pavements to be seen at Silchester camp, are to be discovered.

b. Mile-castles (*castella*) were built at average intervals of a Roman mile[1] along the wall. Sometimes they occur more frequently, when a river or a mountain pass is traversed, a castle being commonly placed to guard the defile. These also are four-cornered, measuring fifty feet, or an average, from north to south, and sixty from east to west. These were part of the wall, being of the same masonry, and having it for their northern defence. They had gates in the centre of their northern and southern sides.

c. Between each mile-castle, four Turrets or Watch-Towers were built, standing therefore about three hundred feet apart. These may be called sentry-boxes. Very little is now left of them, but enough to show that they were very strongly built.

4. *The Rampart* (*Vallum*). This fortification con-

[1] A Roman mile measured 1,618 yards.

sists of a trench and three earthern walls. One of these walls stands between the Great Wall and the trench; a second is close upon the southern edge of the trench; the third is as far from it to the south as the first is to the north. The first and third are larger than the second. Their original dimensions cannot be recovered; but, as they still stand six or seven feet high, they were doubtless considerable. A good deal of stone has been used in their construction. The trench seem to have been somewhat smaller than that which was drawn on the north side of the Great Wall. The *Vallum* is not always close to the Wall. It follows an easier line of country, whereas, as has been said, the wall takes in by choice the most difficult and steepest spots. It does not reach along the whole length of the Wall, but is about three miles short of it at either end.

5. *The Roads.* Of these there were two.

a. A military way ran along the whole length of the Wall, between it and the Rampart. It was twenty feet wide on an average, and was constructed of stone. It did not always keep close to the wall, but took the shortest route from one camp to another. It was intended, of course, for the rapid and easy transport of troops and stores from one point of the Wall to another, according as they might be needed.

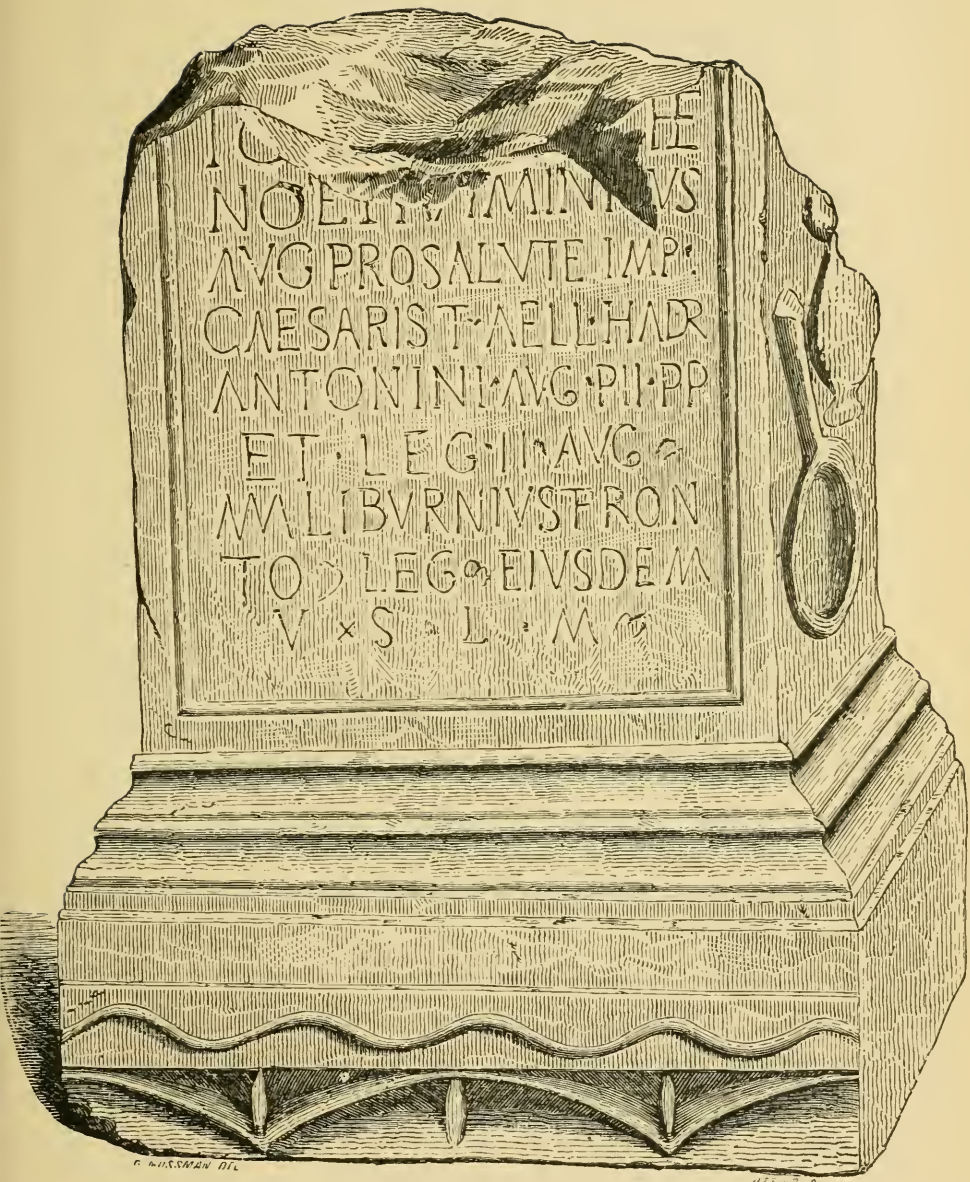
b. A road ran to the south of both Wall and *Vallum*, and afforded additional accommodation, available when hostilities were not actually going on.

This gigantic work, Wall, Camps, Rampart, and Roads (reckoning only the inner way) constituted one great camp, which might be used against enemies *on*

either side. For it is not constructed as if the country to the south were permanently friendly. There are no outlets in the *Vallum* southward, except by the regular gates of the Camps. It must have required at least ten thousand men to garrison it, and, doubtless, could have accommodated, on an emergency, many more.

A second line of defence was constructed by Antoninus Pius, Hadrian's successor. This ran between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde, and joined together the line of forts built about sixty years before by Agricola. It consisted of a trench, which was forty feet wide and twenty deep, and a rampart, constructed close to the southern edge of the trench, which was twenty feet high and twenty-four feet thick. Other forts were built, so that the intervals between them did not exceed two miles in length, and it was arranged that each should be in sight of its next neighbour. On the southern side of the rampart was a platform for the soldiers, and behind this again ran a military way, twenty feet wide. Some remains of this work are still to be seen. They are known by the name of "Graham's Dyke." The *Vallum Antonini*, as it is called, was built by Lollĭus Urbicus between 140 and 145. Urbicus commanded the forces in Britain for twenty years, and pushed the Roman conquests in Northern Britain as far as the Moray Firth. Of the events of the next fifty years we know very little, though we hear of an inroad of the northern tribes, who broke through the rampart of the Upper Isthmus,[1] and were with diffi-

[1] That between the Forth and the Clyde.



ROMAN MILITARY ALTAR.

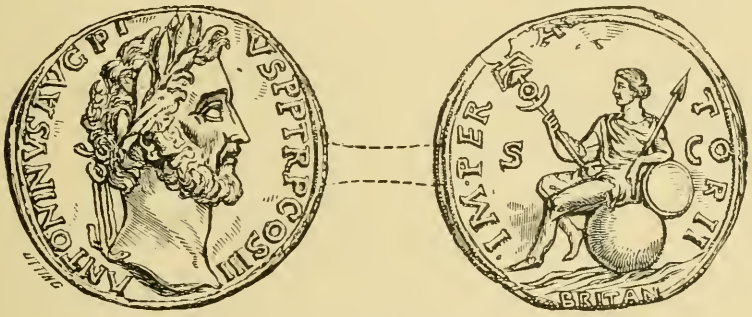
culty repelled by the General Ulpius Marcellus. This was in the year 184, under the reign of Commodus, the vicious successor of the philosophic Aurelius.

The history of Clodius Albinus, the successor of Marcellus in the command of the British armies, shows the growing importance of Britain among the provinces of the Empire. It was to Rome, what India has been to itself in recent times, the "nursery of captains." No legions had more active employment, no generals had better opportunities of distinguishing themselves, and winning the confidence of their troops. Albinus became so important a person that the Emperor Commodus offered him the title of Cæsar.[1] The honour was declined, and Albinus soon after lost the favour of Commodus by denouncing him as a tyrant. He was superseded in his command, but was strong enough to keep it in spite of the Emperor. Septimius Severus, who came to the throne in 193, again offered him the title of Cæsar. This time it was accepted. But Severus only meant to deceive a rival with whom he did not feel himself at the moment strong enough to contend. His first idea was to get rid of him by assassination, for he sent very kindly letters by the hand of messengers who had secret instructions to demand a private audience of the general and to stab him to the heart. The plot failed, but Albinus saw that he must fight for his life. He crossed over to the mainland, taking with him a part of his army, and encountered Severus near Lugdunum (Leyden). In the battle that followed the

[1] This would mean a rank which may be described as "Vice-Emperor," and it would imply the right of succession to the throne.

British legions maintained their high reputation. At one moment it seemed likely that Severus would be defeated. But he rallied his troops, and the day ended with a decisive victory for him. Albinus was captured and put to death. He was the first, as we shall see, of a long line of pretenders to the throne, who mostly came to a violent end.

Early in 208 Severus himself visited the island The northern tribes had continued to trouble the peace of the settled province, and he was resolved to punish them, and not sorry, at the same time, to



COIN OF ANTONINUS PIUS.

employ his army and the two young princes, his sons, in active service. He marched accordingly northwards, and reached, it is said, the very extremity of the island. The natives did not attempt to meet him in the field, but they laid ambuscades, and harassed the rear and flanks of his army. The hardships and difficulties of the expedition were enormous. We can imagine what a place the Highlands of Scotland must have been for a regular army to traverse when there were no roads, and the country was largely covered with forest. The labours of the march, and of

the works in the way of bridges and causeways that had to be constructed, the wet and the cold, for the expedition was prolonged into the winter, caused a terrible mortality among the troops. When at last the Caledonians begged for peace, delivering up some of their arms and yielding a portion of their territory, Severus had lost as many as fifty thousand men. And he had gained nothing. No sooner was the legion withdrawn to the south than the native tribes again rebelled. Severus, who was then at Eboracum (York) swore that he would exterminate them, and began to prepare for a new expedition. He did not live to fulfil this purpose. He had suffered greatly from illness during the expedition, and his malady now increased upon him, being aggravated, it is said, by the ill behaviour of his son, Caracalla. He died at Eboracum in 210. The permanent memorial that he left behind him of his stay in Britain was the strengthening of the Vallum Antonini by a second wall. We may assign to this period the height of the Roman dominion in Britain. Its extent and the provinces into which it was subdivided are exhibited in Map I.

IX.

THE TYRANTS.

THE middle of the third century was a period of great depression in the Roman Empire, and the reign of Gallienus (260–268) marks its lowest point. This prince had been associated by his father, Valerian, in the Empire. In 260 Valerian was conquered and put to death by the Parthian king, Sapor, and his death was the signal for frightful disorders. A number of pretenders, to whom the historians of the next century gave the name of "The Thirty Tyrants," [1] started up in various provinces of the East and West. Several of these usurpers rose to power in Gaul, and these seem to have included Britain in the dominions which they acquired and lost in rapid succession. The rise of the first of these, Latinius Postumus, dates indeed from before the fall of Valerian. He had been appointed by that emperor to defend the Rhine frontier, had taken offence at some slight, and proclaimed his independence. This he maintained for nine years. In 267 he was overthrown by one Laelianus. Lae-

[1] The original "Thirty Tyrants" were a committee of thirty members which ruled at Athens when the democratic government of that State was for a time (404 B.C.) changed into an oligarchy.

lianus was slain by his own soldiers in the same year. Victorinus, who succeeded him, fell a victim to private vengeance in the year following. His mother, Victoria, succeeded him in his power, but handed it over first to one Marius, an armourer, and then, when Marius had gone the way of his predecessors, to Caius Tetricus. After Tetricus had held power for three years, Aurelian, a vigorous soldier, worthy of the best days of Rome, conquered him. It seems indeed that Tetricus was not unwilling to be conquered, and that he betrayed his army to his opponent. It is certain that his fate was very different from that commonly reserved for unsuccessful usurpers. He and his son were exhibited indeed in Aurelian's triumph, but they were afterwards treated with kindness and even distinction. The father lived to an advanced age in retirement; the son was promoted to high offices in the state. It is certain, however, that during their period of power the island ceased to be part of the Roman Empire. Many of their coins have been found, and those of Tetricus are very common among Romano-British remains.

Britain, recovered by Aurelian, did not remain long in its allegiance. For some time its southern and eastern shores, as well as the northern shore of Gaul, had been exposed to the ravages of pirates, who issued from the harbours of the North Sea, and possibly even of the Baltic—the first-comers of the swarms of invaders who, under the names of Franks, Saxons, Danes, and Normans, were to work such a change on the face of Northern and Western Europe, and even to make themselves felt as far as Constanti-

ROMAN VASE OF DARK BROWN CAISTOR WARE.

(*From the original in the British Museum.*)

nople in the East. It was found necessary to have a fleet to keep these marauders in check, and the officer who had the command of it, and whose special task it was to protect the British and Gallic coasts, bore the title of "Count of the Saxon Shore."[1] The Count had his head-quarters at Gessoriacum, or Bononia, now called Boulogne, as a convenient place for protecting the entrance to the Channel. In 287 a certain Carausius held this office, by the appointment of Maximianus, colleague of Diocletian in the Empire. Indeed, it seems likely that he was the first to hold it.

Carausius was a native of the country now known as Holland. He had risen from the ranks by his ability and courage, and his ambition was still unsatisfied. He made use of his new office to further it. If the writers attached to the cause of his enemies are to be believed—and we know nothing about his actions and character except from them—he made compacts with the pirates by which they were permitted to pass westward on condition of giving him a part of their gains. By the wealth thus gained he strengthened his position, making alliances with barbarian tribes, and equipping his fleet in the most effective manner. When he openly rebelled we can-

[1] It is not a little puzzling to be told that a part of the coast derived its name from the tribes which were in the habit of ravaging it. It has been suggested that some at least of its inhabitants, especially in Gaul, were Saxon. But the matter is obscure, and to discuss it wou'd take me too far from the purpose of this volume. It may be sufficient to quote Gibbon's note: "Aurelius Victor calls them Germans. Eutropius gives them the name of Saxons. But Eutropius lived in the ensuing century, and seems to use the language of his own time."

not say, but it is certain that he was independent in the year 287.

Diocletian and his colleagues had already so much on their hands that they could not deal with this new trouble. For some years Carausius was left alone, and even recognized as an additional colleague by the emperors. But when Constantius, a vigorous young soldier, was raised to the rank of Cæsar [1] (March 11, 291), an effort was made to recover the province of Britain. An orator of the time speaks of its fertile fields, its rich mines, its convenient

COIN OF CARAUSIUS.

harbours, with an idea, doubtless, of magnifying the prince who had recovered it, but, of course, not without some foundation of truth. Anyhow, it was thought worthy of an expedition. Constantius set about his task with such speed that his arrival on the field of action was altogether unexpected. He began by besieging Bononia, which the naval and land forces of Carausius held in force. The mouth of the harbour was blocked up, and the place, which Carau-

[1] The arrangement of Diocletian was that there should be two Augusti and two Cæsars, who may be described as emperors and vice emperors.

sius was unable to relieve with his fleet, surrendered. Constantius was obliged to be content with this success. He had no ships with which to cross over into Britain. This want, however, seems to have been supplied during the winter, for the next year (292) he actually started for the island. Bad weather, however, drove him back, and the expedition had to be abandoned. Whether Carausius was again acknowledged by the Augusti we do not know. In the following year he was murdered by one of his lieutenants, Allectus by name, who assumed the title of Augustus. For three years Allectus seems to have been left alone, though it is difficult to form any definite idea of what happened from the very unsatisfactory narratives that have come down to us.[1] In 297 Constantius made another effort to recover Britain. The forces of the expedition seem to have been divided into two parts, one under the command of an officer named Asclepiodotus, the other led by Constantius himself. The fleet of Allectus was posted near the island of Vectis (Isle of Wight) to intercept the invaders. Asclepiodotus passed it unobserved in a fog, landed in Britain, and to make retreat impossible, burnt his ships.[2] Constantius, with the other detach-

[1] One writer in Smith's "Dictionary of Classical Biography" speaks of Allectus having been subdued "after a struggle of three years" (Art. Constantius); another (Art. Allectus), of the army and fleet of Constantius having been sent against him at the end of three years. The latter is the impression left on my mind by the language of a contemporary writer, the author of the Panegyric on Maximian and Constantius.

[2] So the Panegyrist quoted above asserts, but the statement has an improbable look.

ment, also made his way to the island unhindered. Allectus, in flying from him, encountered Asclepiodotus, and was defeated and slain. Some of the vanquished army, which, we are told, consisted largely of Franks, made their way to Londinium, and were busy in plundering it, when Constantius arrived with his troops and drove them away. Britain was thus restored to the Empire. The Panegyrist tells us that one happy result of this event was that the Frankish pirates, whom Carausius and Allectus had made no effort to check, intent, as they probably were, on maintaining their own position, were no longer permitted to ravage the western coasts of Europe.

Constantius spent much of the remainder of his life in Britain. In 309, on the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian, he succeeded to the rank of Augustus, and in the following year (July 25th) he died at Eboracum, when he was preparing to start on an expedition against the northern tribes. It was at Eboracum that his son Constantine,[1] the first Christian Emperor, was proclaimed Augustus.

We know very little about the history of the island during the next hundred years ; but the little that has been recorded show that the causes which had led to the usurpation of Carausius, the remoteness of the province and the weakness of the central authority, were still in active operation. In fact, we are told little by the historians beyond the names of successive usurpers. When Magnentius was proclaimed Emperor

[1] Constantine was the son of Constantius by his first wife Helena. Helena has often been spoken of as a British princess. She really was the daughter of a tavern-keeper at Antioch.

in 350, Britain formed part of his dominions, and it passed again into the hands of the home authorities at his fall three years later. Paullus, surnamed Catena, a notary of the Court, was sent by Constantius II. to regulate its affairs, after the repression of the rebellion, and is said to have been guilty of many exactions and cruelties.

Meanwhile the northern tribes had been growing more and more troublesome. The Emperor Constans (337–350) is said to have marched against them, but we know nothing beyond the bare fact. Constantius II. (337–361) sent another force against them towards the end of his reign. No permanent success was attained Their attacks became more formidable, and the Roman forces suffered several defeats. In 369, however, Valentinian I. sent into the island Theodosius, one of the ablest of his generals. The Picts and Scots (for by these two names the northern tribes were chiefly known) seem by this time to have penetrated to the very south of the island. Theodosius encountered them several times on his way from the coast to London. This town, which had been in danger of capture, received him very gladly. After some time spent in settling the affairs of the country, he marched northwards, fought two campaigns against the tribes, and drove them beyond the barrier of Antoninus. The country lying between this and the Great Wall was organized into a province, and received the name of Valentia.[1]

[1] It is probably a poetical exaggeration in Claudian, when he talks of Thule and the Orcades (Shetland and Orkney) being stained with Pictish blood. It is very unlikely that Theodosius pushed his conquests so far.

In 383 the armies of the West rose against Gratianus, who had offended them, not only by neglecting the affairs of the State for the pleasures of the chase, but by choosing barbarian guards and even wearing barbarian dress. They offered the purple to Maximus, who was living in retirement in Britain, and who is said by some to have belonged to a noble family of the island. Maximus (whom the contemporary poet Ausonius speaks of as "the brigand of Rutupiae") crossed over into Gaul, and marched against Gratianus, who was killed on Aug. 23 near Lugdunum (Lyons). Theodosius I., son of the Theodosius who has been previously mentioned, was now in possession of the eastern part of the Empire, and Valentinian II. was the colleague of his elder brother Gratianus in the West. These two princes did not feel themselves strong enough to attack Maximus, who was permitted to retain possession of Western Europe for four years. In 387 he attempted to add Italy to his dominions. At first he was successful, for Valentinian fled to Thessalonica. But in 388 Theodosius, who had taken up the cause of the fallen emperor, invaded Italy, and defeated Maximus in two battles. Maximus fled across the Alps, was captured at Aquileia, and put to death by the soldiers.

About six years later we hear of the great general Stilicho winning victories over the Picts in Britain. It seems, however, probable that he never actually landed in the island, but that the report of his approach was sufficient to make the invaders retreat.

Early in the next century we hear of a certain Marcus being proclaimed emperor by the soldiers

of Britain, of his being succeeded very soon by a Gratianus, who is described as a "townsman of Britain," of Gratianus himself being assassinated after a reign of four months, and of being succeeded by a Constantinus. Constantinus is said to have been a common soldier at the time of his elevation, and to have owed it to the accident of his name. He appears, however, to have been a man of some ability, or, anyhow, to have had able advisers about him. In 408 he crossed over into Gaul, and established his power over that country and Spain. He was even recognized as Augustus by Honorius, then Emperor of the West, but did not maintain his position for more than two or three years.

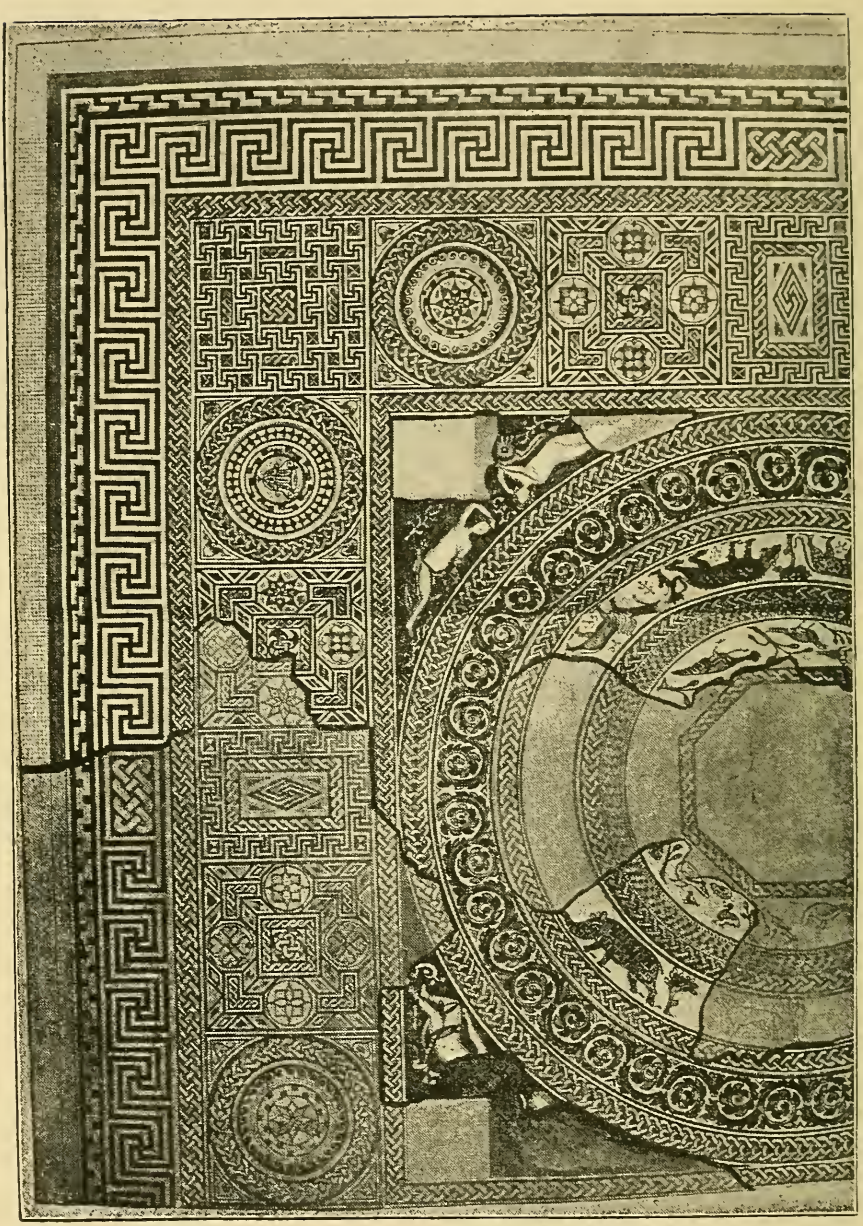
The removal of the troops from Britain by Constantinus the Usurper was probably the real end of the Roman occupation of the island. Three years afterwards (410) Honorius addressed a rescript to the "Cities of Britain" by which he relaxed the Julian Law against the carrying of weapons, and commanded the Britons to defend themselves. Still Britain was formally recognized as one of the provinces of the Empire. As late as 537 Belisarius granted it to the Goths in the name of the Emperor. In fact, however, it had long passed out of Roman power. In 446 the Britons, pressed hard by the Saxon invaders, begged for help from Aëtius, the great general who held Attila in check; but the request was refused. Britain had now to shift for herself; to tell how she fared is my next business.

Before I pass to it, however, the question, What did the Romans leave behind them in Britain? may be

very briefly answered, or rather noticed, for to answer it is impossible. The fact is that few matters in the region of history are more obscure. One thing is tolerably plain, that there has been no continuity of Roman life in this country such as may be traced in Italy, in Spain, in France. Each of these countries has been swept, and swept many times, by invasion, but there has always remained an element of population strong enough to keep up the continuity of life. Perhaps the languages of the *Latin* countries as they are called as compared with English affords the most significant illustration. There is a large Latin element in English, not speaking, of course, of that which it inherits together with Latin from a common ancestor. But this element is of later introduction. In Early English it may almost be said not to exist. In the languages of Italy, Spain, and France, this Latin element occupies a quite different position ; it is the foundation of them, not an alien element.

There are two other questions, both closely connected with this, which have been debated with no little vehemence. How far did the Romans influence the life of the British population? How far did the British population survive the English invasion? If we believe that the Britons were annihilated by the invaders then it is easy also to believe that they had been thoroughly Romanized. If, on the other hand, a considerable element survived, then we should expect to find a larger trace of Roman influence in the life of early England.

On one point we can speak with certainty. The Roman occupation of the island was complete. The

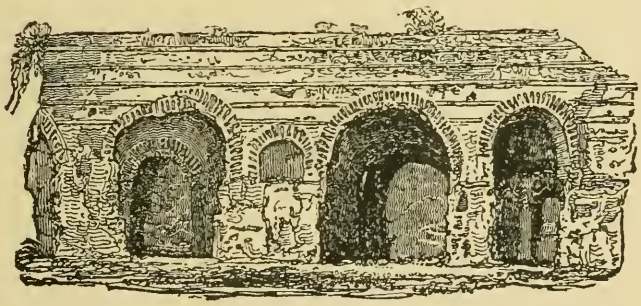


ROMAN TESSELATED PAVEMENT.

(*The finest specimen yet discovered in England. The dark portion is the original, the light portion is the restored.*)

remains of their houses, their camps, their worship, their domestic life, literally abound.[1] Nor was this occupation simply military. It is sufficient, for proof of this, to point to the remains of such houses as are to be seen at Bignor (near Chichester), and Chedworth in Gloucestershire. It is clear that wealthy Romans took up their abode in this island ; and wealthy men do not live in a country that is not thoroughly settled. But how far their influence touched the native population remains, and probably must remain, unknown.

[1] Any one who wants a proof of this should study Mr. G. L. Gomme's "Romano-British Remains." Two volumes are filled with accounts of the discoveries of Roman remains. And this is only a selection. Probably, too, a great number of discoveries have never been recorded at all.



ROMAN RUINS, LINCOLN.

X.

THE ENGLISH CONQUEST.

In speaking of Britain before the Romans, I made no mention of the legend in which Brutus, the great-grandson of Æneas, is said to have given his name to Britain. Widely believed as it was in the Middle Ages, it is manifestly a fable from beginning to end. We cannot say the same of the legend which has for its hero—perhaps I should rather say its chief character—Vortigern, the betrayer of Britain. This, it can scarcely be doubted, has at least the basis of truth. There is no reason for disbelieving in the existence of a Vortigern. This legend, then, I shall therefore briefly tell before passing on to the history.

The Legend of Vortigern.

"Vortigern, King of Kent, seeing that the Picts troubled him by land and the Saxons by sea, thought to himself, 'I shall do well if I can set these robbers the one against the other.' So he spake to one Hengist, their chief. 'Let us make alliance together:' and to this Hengist consented, and he made

a feast to which he called King Vortigern. Now Hengist had a daughter Rowena, who was exceeding fair, and the maiden stood at the board and served the king with mead. When the king looked upon her, he loved her; and he said to Hengist, for his reason had gone from him, 'Give me the maid to wife, and I will give you the kingdom of Kent.' To this Hengist consented; but the nobles of the land would not have the stranger to rule over them. Therefore they put down Vortigern from his place, and made Vortimer his son king in his stead. And Vortimer fought against Hengist and the Saxons; three times he fought against them, till he drove them out of the land. Then for five years Hengist wandered over the sea in his ships. But when the five years were past, Vortimer died, and Vortigern was made king as he had been before. Thus said Hengist to him, 'Give me the kingdom, according to your promise.' Vortigern answered him, 'Let me ask counsel of my nobles.' So the nobles assembled themselves three hundred in all, and for every British noble there was also a Saxon chief. But as they sat together, Hengist cried aloud, 'Draw your daggers!' and as he spake, each Saxon smote the Briton that sat by his side, and slew him. So the three hundred fell in one day all save King Vortigern, for him they spared by command of Hengist. And after this the strangers held the land without further question."

When we pass from legend to history, we find ourselves in what may be called a kind of twilight. It is not wholly dark, but the light is dim; it shows

only a few great facts that are unquestionably true, perhaps a few figures that are the figures of men who really lived.

The first coming of the English is assigned to the year 449. "Hengist and Horsa, invited by Vortigern, King of the Britons, sought Britain; first in support of the Britons, but afterwards they fought against them." These are the words of the shortest and, we may suppose, the earliest form of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A longer form gives us some more particulars, the truth of which there is no reason for doubting, that the reason why King Vortigern asked the help of the two chiefs, leaders as they were of a people that had harried the shores of Britain for centuries, was, that they might help him against the Picts, and that they came with three ships, and that they were rewarded for their service with land in the south-east of the island. Further on it adds that these first-comers were Jutes, dwellers, *i.e.*, in the country which is still known by the name of Jutland. Both forms of the Chronicle give the name of the place were Hengist and Horsa landed as "Ypwines fleot," or "Heopwines fleot." There is little difficulty in making out that this is Ebbsfleet, near Ramsgate, in the district which is still called the Isle of Thanet, and which was then separated from the mainland by a channel, navigable at high water by ships, and at low water to be crossed only by a single ford.

For some years Vortigern's new friends were content to remain in the place which had been allotted to them. At first, indeed, they were not strong enough to venture upon any other course. The

crews of three ships, even if these were of the largest size, could scarcely have numbered more than five hundred men, and so small a force did not think it worth their while to turn against those who fed and paid them. Meanwhile they were growing stronger. "They sent," says the Chronicler, "to the Angles; and bade them be told of the worthlessness of the Britons, and the richness of the land." And the writer goes on to describe how there came men from the three tribes of Germany, from the Old Saxons, the Angles, and the Jutes. Doubtless this refers, as far as its mention of the Old Saxons and Angles is concerned, to a later time; but we may feel sure that a report of the good land on which they had settled, and of the ease with which it might be won, was carried across the sea to their kinsman in Jutland. Six years after their first landing they were strong enough to move. When we next hear of them they are some way from the Isle of Thanet, of which the westward boundary is the Stour. In 455, "Hengist and Horsa fought with Vortigern the King on the spot that is called Aylesford."[1] The battle, we may guess, was fiercely contested, for Horsa was slain. "Hengist afterwards took to the kingdom with his son Esc." Two years afterwards we hear of another battle. By this time the invaders have made their way still further westward, for "Hengist and Esc fought with the Britons on the spot that is called Crayford,[2] and there slew four thousand men." The battle ended in a decisive victory for the

[1] Aylesford is on the Medway about four miles below Maidstone.

[2] The Cray is a little stream which falls into the Darent.

Jutes. "The Britons then forsook the land of Kent, and in great consternation fled to London." We shall find London serving again and again as a safe shelter when the descendants of these invaders were themselves invaded from the sea.

Then, if the chronicles of the British may be trusted, came a change of fortune. The unlucky prince, who had called in these dangerous allies to his help, and was now unable to resist them, was overthrown by another enemy, Aurelius Ambrosianus, a Roman by descent. Aurelius, having conquered his rival, turned his arms against the invaders, and drove them back into the territory which they had first occupied. For the eight years between 457 and 465 the Chronicle is a blank. Then comes the record of another battle, fought at a place called "Wippedsfleet," from the name of a Jutish chief, who fell there. It ended in a complete victory for the invaders. "This year Hengist and Horsa fought with the Welsh,[1] nigh Wippedsfleet; and there slew twelve leaders, all Welsh." After another great interval of silence, came in 473 the record of another great victory. "This year Hengist and Esc fought with the Welsh, and took immense booty. And the Welsh fled from the English like fire." Then was founded the first of the English kingdoms, Kent. Hengist is said to have ruled it until the year 479, and to have been succeeded by his son Esc, from whom the line of Kentish princes received the title of Escings.

[1] Welsh means "foreigner"; the invaders, by a strange yet common figure of speech, calling the native people "foreigners."

If this date be correct, the first German conqueror was still alive when the second came across the sea to attack another part of the island. In 477 "came Ella to Britain with his three sons, Cymen, and Wlenking, and Cissa, in three ships, landing at a place that is called Cymen's-ora. There they slew many of the Welsh ; and some in flight they drove into the wood that is called Andredsweald." Ella was a Saxon, and in him we have the first of another of the three German tribes, which were to join in the making of England. When we first hear of the Saxons[1] they must have been near neighbours of the Jutes, for they are described as dwelling in the country now known as Holstein. But between that time and the date of their first coming to Britain they must have shifted their quarters southward and westward to the region occupied by Oldenburg and Hanover. Their wanderings in search of plunder—for these, it will be remembered, were the rovers against whom the Count of the Saxon Shore[2] had to defend the coasts of Britain and Gaul—took them far afield; and they seem to have made settlements along the southern coasts of the North Sea and even of the Channel. The growing power of the Franks, driving them back to their old boundaries, may have been one of the causes which led to their following the example of their Jutish kinsmen.

The Welsh, who fled into the "great wood that is called Andredsweald," made a stubborn resistance. The region was then, as it became again long after-

[1] In the second century of our era, from the geographer Ptolemy.

[2] See p. 82.

wards, the scene of a busy manufacture of iron,[1] and the natives were a sturdy race and plentifully supplied with arms. They had, too, in Anderida[2] a strong fortress built by those skilful engineers the Romans. In 485 "Ella fought with the Welsh nigh Mercred's-Burnsted," a spot which we may identify with Lye. The Chronicler does not claim a victory for his countrymen. Anyhow, five years more were to pass before the work was completed. In 490 "Ella and Cissa besieged the city Andred, and slew all that were therein ; nor was one Briton left there afterwards." "They so destroyed the place," writes a chronicler nearly eight centuries later, "that it was never afterwards rebuilt ; only the site, as of a very fair city, is to be seen, utterly desolate, by those that pass by." Sussex, the land of the South Saxons, was the second of the English kingdoms.

The dates of the other settlements of the invaders cannot be fixed with even such probability as we are able to attain in the two cases already mentioned. It will be convenient to speak first of those which were made by the Saxons properly so called.

Under the year 495 the Chronicler writes : "This year came two leaders into Britain, Cerdic and Cynric, his son, with five ships, at a place that is called Cerdic's-ore.[3] And they fought with the Welsh

[1] The Sussex iron works continued in operation till nearly the close of the seventeenth century. After that date the trade was transferred to the coal districts of Midland and Northern England. The iron railings that surround St. Paul's Cathedral in London were manufactured at Sussex forges.

[2] From Pevensey about four miles eastward of Eastbourne.

[3] The mouth of the Itchen, now Southampton.

that same day." Six years afterwards he tells us how one Porta and his two sons landed at a place that is now called Portsmouth, and then again, after an interval of seven years, Cerdic and Cynric reappear in the record that they "slew a British king whose name was Natan-leod, and five thousand men with him." Whether or no Netley, near Southampton, was really called after this British prince, as the Chronicler asserts, the mention of this place marks the scene of the conflict. It was so near the spot where the two Saxon chiefs had landed twelve years before that we may safely conclude that in the interval the invaders had made but little progress. Indeed six years afterwards we hear how the "West Saxons came into Britain with three ships," at the very place—Cerdic's-ore—where they are said to have landed at their first coming. But this time they had new allies with them. "Stuf and Wihtgar fought with the Britons and put them to flight." Stuf and Wihtgar were Jutes, and they ultimately received as the price of their help the Isle of Wight and a portion of territory on the mainland.[1] During the five years which the Chronicler passes over in silence a fierce conflict was doubtless being waged between the West Saxons and the native tribes. We are told only of its end. Under the year 521 we read: "This year Cerdic and Cynric undertook the government of the West Saxons; the same

[1] Bede, in his "Ecclesiastical History," i. 15, says "Of Jutish race are the men of Canterbury and the men of Vectis (Vectuarii), that is, the race which inhabits the island of Vectis, and that which up to this very time, in the provinces of the West Saxons, is called Jutland, lying over against the island of Vectis."

year they fought with the Britons at a place now called Charford." [1]

The Chronicler is as unwilling as historians have commonly shown themselves to record defeats, and we have to gather from other sources the true story of what followed the battle of Charford. The West Saxons (*Gewissas* as they appear to have been called) pursued their conquests in the region now know as Hampshire and Somersetshire. But in the next year they met with a decisive defeat, which for a time checked their northward progress. The Britons met them at Badon Hill (near Bath), and inflicted on them a crushing defeat. It is in this battle that the great British champion, Arthur, seems to come for an instant out of the darkness with which he is surrounded. The fight at Badon Hill is the one event in his long struggle with the invaders which seems historical. We hear, too, of details of the conflict which may indeed be due to the fancy of the bards who sang in after-days of the glories of the great national hero, but have a certain look of reality. The Britons, we are told, occupied the upper part of the hill, the Saxons with their host, formed like a wedge, stood below. For the whole of the first day the heathen host remained firm ; on the second, the desperate valour of Arthur and his people broke through the lines, and for a time Western Britain was saved.

Whatever may be the truth about Badon Hill, it is certain that for some time after their victory of Charford Cerdic and his Saxons made no further advance

[1] Charford is on the Lower Avon, and about ten miles south of Salisbury.

inland. We hear indeed of their fighting one battle at Cerdic's Ceal in 527; and three years afterwards we find them subduing the Isle of Wight and handing it over to the two Jutish chiefs.[1] The death of Cerdic is assigned to the year 534, and his son is said to have succeeded him, and to have reigned for twenty-seven years over the kingdom of the West Saxons, or WESSEX.

Two smaller settlements of the same tribe, it must be sufficient to mention, as we know nothing about the time of their making or the manner in which they were made. London, which had resisted the advance of the Jutish conquerors of Kent, seems to have fallen before the attack of some Saxon invaders, who afterwards, from their inland position, received the name of the Middle Saxons, a name still preserved in Middlesex. To the north and east of them, in the region now called Essex, yet another colony from the same stock, the East Saxons, found a habitation. Both states remained small and unimportant.

The third great stock of the German conquerors of Britain was the most important of the three, if we may judge from the fact that it ultimately gave its name to the island. The Celtic populations among us speak indeed of their Teutonic neighbours as Saxons, but the land of the English, the Angles, is the name by which the country is known in history and to the world in general. Yet, curiously enough, we know less of the Angles than we do either of the Jutes or

[1] Stuf and Wihtgar are described as "nephews" of Cerdic. If this be so Cerdic must have married a Jutish wife. This is an easy way of accounting for the alliance of the two tribes.

the Saxons. Tacitus indeed mentions the Angli, with other tribes, as dwelling in a remote and inaccessible region, but gives no particulars. Fifty years afterwards, Ptolemy speaks of them as inhabiting part of the left bank of the Elbe. Later on, we find them located in the Cimbric peninsula,[1] between the Jutes and the Saxons. It is from this country that Bede speaks of them as migrating when they followed their neighbours to Britain, and this in such numbers that their original country was left wholly without inhabitants.[2] There is still a corner of land called Angelis in Sleswick, lying a little to the north of the harbour of Kiel. But there are writers of no small authority who hold that there was no real difference between Angles and Saxons. It is certain indeed that they were closely related ; but for the purpose of the present volume it will suffice to accept the commonly received division, and to speak of the Angles as the third, and probably the strongest, of the three stocks.

Of the conquest of the Angles we know little beyond the results. North of the East Saxons and south of the Wash was a region in which, as we have reason for thinking, some German settlers had already taken up their abode. This was occupied by one colony of Angles which afterwards divided itself into two portions, respectively called the North and South Folk.[3] The first king of the East Angles is said to

[1] By the "Cimbric peninsula" is meant the projecting piece of land containing Holstein, Sleswick, and Jutland.

[2] It is curious to find Bede speaking of this country as "vetus Anglia," *Old England*. We have in this a still older England than the country which now commonly bears the name.

[3] Norfolk and Suffolk.

have been one Uffa, who gave his name to a line of princes known as Uffings.

North of the Wash was the country once dominated by the Roman colony of Lindum.[1] Lindum was no more able to hold out against the invaders than London had been. But the new-comers took their name from the stronghold which they had conquered, and called themselves Lindiswaras, a name still preserved in the Lindsey district of Lincolnshire. Separate at first, the Lindiswaras afterwards were joined to East Anglia.

Between the Humber and the Forth was another region which fell by degrees, during the latter part of the fifth and the first half of the sixth century, into the hands of the Angles. The long range of unprotected coast was first occupied by them, and they gradually extended their conquests inland. Eboracum[2] shared the fate of London and Lindum. The whole of this country may be described by the general name of Northumbria. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which is commonly very sparing of all notices of the doing of the Angles, records, under 547, "in this year Ida assumed the kingdom, from whom came the royal race of Northumbrians." Northumbria was sometimes one kingdom, sometimes divided into two—Deira and Bernicia—lying, respectively, south and north of the Tyne. It is interesting to note that Bamborough is mentioned as the spot which Ida first occupied as his base of operations. "He surrounded it," said the Chronicler, "first with a ditch, and afterwards with a wall."

[1] Lincoln. [2] York.

In the latter half of the sixth century the West Saxons regained their activity, and pushed forwards the conquests which had been checked awhile by the defeat at Badon Hill. Under the year 552, the Chronicle records: "In this year Cynric fought against the British in a place which is called Searoburgh (Old Sarum), and put the Brito-Welsh to flight." Four years afterwards we find him fighting with the same enemies at Barbury Hill, some twenty-five miles to the north.[1] In 560 Cynric was succeeded by his son Ceawlin, and under his rule the West Saxons made rapid progress. After a conflict with the ruler of Kent—the first instance we find on record of strife between different stocks of the conquerors—we find him in 571 fighting against the Brito-Welsh at Bedford, and taking four towns (one of which can be clearly identified as Aylesbury); and in 577, again, we read how Ceawlin and Cuthwine (a brother of the king) fought against three kings at Deorham, and took three cities from them—Gloucester and Cirencester and Bath. Frethern (in Gloucestershire) is mentioned (though we cannot be certain of the place) as the scene of another battle (584). Here "Cutha was slain, and Ceawlin took many towns, and countless booty, and returned thence wrathful to his own." This may be said to mark, for a time, the furthest advance of Wessex as against the British population.

[1] If the "Beranbarh" of the Chronicle is, as Mr. Thorpe thinks, Banbury, in the north of Oxfordshire, it would show a greater advance. Barbury is a height of the Marlborough Downs (between Swindon and Marlborough). The remains of a great British camp are still to be seen there.

The great victory of Deorham was the last of Ceawlin's successes.

Another kingdom remains to be spoken of—Mercia, the settlement of the Angles in Central England. No part of the history of the Conquest is more obscure. The name of Mercians signifies "Men of the Marshes," and refers to their position as living on the boundaries of the British kingdoms. It must, therefore, be somewhat late in date. That the tribes who had conquered Eastern England, which was then, it must be remembered, largely occupied by marsh and fen, pushed their way to the westward, may be fairly conjectured. And it is also probable that advance parties from the West Saxons, after these had resumed their career of conquest, came northwards. Mercia, therefore, may be regarded as mainly an Anglian settlement, but with the admixture of a certain Saxon element. It has been pointed out that in history it appears as less united in feeling and action than any other of the English states. Its first king is said to have been Crida, whose death is assigned to the year 600.

In 577 the work of the conquerors was substantially finished. Let us see how the two races—British and Saxon (or English, as we shall hereafter call it) stood to one another; how they shared the island between them.

South of the Bristol Channel the Britons still occupied Cornwall, Devonshire, and almost all Somersetshire and Dorsetshire. This region was called West Wales.

North of the Bristol Channel we must imagine a

BRITAIN
577 - 580
English Miles
0 25 50 100
Picts
Strathclyde
Britons
NORTHUMBRIA
Bernicia
Deira
Cumbria
Forest of Elmet
The Humber
Pec-Saetan
Snotinga
Mercians
Lindiswara
The Wash
N. Folk
East Engle
S. Folk
M. Engle
S. Engle
Iceni
North Wales
Forest of Wyre
Forest of Arden
Hwiccas
E. Saxons
Forest of Deane
West Saxons
Deorham
M. Sexe
LONDONBURH
R. Thames
Surrey
Kent
JUTES
Andredsweald
South Saxons
Forest of Selwood
West Wales
Walker & Boutall sc.

MAP 2—A.D. 577.

Wales—North Wales, a it was called—advanced eastward so far as to include Monmouth, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Cheshire, and some portion of Gloucestershire and Worcester.

North of the Mersey, again, we have another British state including Lancashire, the hilly region of Western Yorkshire, and the mountain counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland. This goes by the name of Cumbria.

Finally, north of the Solway Firth is the British state of Strathclyde, reaching as far as the Firth of Clyde.

The remainder of the island, putting the region north of the Clyde and Forth out of the question, consists of about three-fifths. The Angles occupy the North and East and North Midlands, the Saxons the remainder, excepting the Jutish kingdom of Kent, and the Jutish settlements of the Isle of Wight and the south of Hampshire. These latter, however, seem not to have been independent.

But the boundary between Welsh and English was continually shifting, always in a westerly direction. In the course of another century and a half, West Wales had disappeared, as had Cumbria also; while North Wales had been reduced to something like the present dimension of Wales, except that it would include the county of Monmouth.

And what, it may be asked, became of the inhabitants of the country that thus became English instead of being British? This is a question that has been variously answered; some writers holding that the Britons were exterminated; others, that large num-

bers of them were left. Possibly the right answer lies between the two, but nearer to the first than to the second. It is not too much to say that the language was absolutely changed, and that with the British language the laws and the religion of the conquered people disappeared. But it is only reasonable to suppose that the native race did not fare alike in all parts of the country. There is a large part of England in which, except in the names of some large natural features, such as rivers and hills, not a trace of the Celt remains. Roughly speaking, this part corresponds to that which has been already described as belonging to the conquerors in 577. But westward of this line the Celtic element becomes more and more evident. No one, for instance, who compares a Herefordshire peasant with his fellow in Sussex, can doubt that there is a considerable difference of race between them, and that this difference comes from a mixture of Celtic blood. And when we come to the extreme west of the island (I leave Wales out of consideration), we find in Cornwall a Celtic language which has only ceased to be spoken within the memory of persons still living.

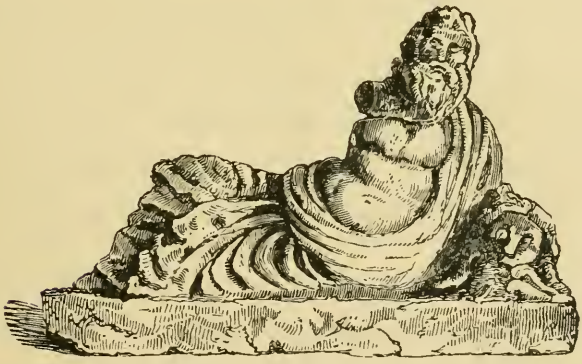
But what really happened can never be known. No records of the time have been left, except some such brief notice as we find of the taking of Anderida, that "there was not one Briton left." Yet here and there nature has preserved some curiously significant record of those dreadful days. One such memorial has been eloquently interpreted by a writer, to whom every student of history owes a debt larger than can be expressed. I cannot better conclude this chapter then by quoting it :

"If history tells us nothing of the victories that laid this great district at the feet of its conquerors, the spade of the archæologist has done somewhat to reveal the ruin and misery of the conquered people. The caves of the Yorkshire moorlands preserve traces of the miserable fugitives who fled to them for shelter. Such a cave opens on the side of a lonely ravine, known now as the King's Scaur, high up in the moors beside Settle. In primæval ages it had been a haunt of hyænas, who dragged thither the mammoths, the reindeer, the bisons, and the bears that growled in the neighbouring glens. At a later time it became a home of savages, whose stone adzes and flint knives and bone harpoons are still embedded in its floor. But these, too, vanished in their turn, and this haunt of primitive man lay lonely and undisturbed till the sword of the English invaders drove the Roman provincials for shelter to the moors. The hurry of their flight may be gathered from the relics their cave-life has left behind it. There was clearly little time to do more than to drive off the cattle, the swine, the goats, whose bones lie scattered round the hearth fire at the mouth of the cave, where they served the wretched fugitives for food. The women must have buckled hastily their brooches of bronze or parti-coloured enamel, the peculiar workmanship of Celtic Britain, and snatched up a few household implements as they hurried away. The men, no doubt, girded on as hastily the swords, whose dainty sword hilts of ivory and bronze still remain to tell the tale of their doom, and hiding in their breast what money the house contained, from coins of Trajan to

FLINT KNIVES.

(*Reproduced from "Transactions of the Essex Field Club."*)

the wretched 'minims' that told of the Empire's decay, mounted their horses to protect their flight. At nightfall all were crouching beneath the dripping roof of the cave or round the fire that was blazing at its mouth, and a long suffering began in which the fugitives lost year by year the memory of the civilization from which they came. A few charred bones show how hunger drove them to slay their horses for food; reddened pebbles mark the hour when the new vessels they wrought were too weak to stand the fire, and their meal was cooked by dropping heated stones into the pot. A time seems to have come when their very spindles were exhausted, and the women who wove in that dark retreat made spindle whorls as they could from the bones that lay about them."



STATUE OF A RIVER GOD—PROBABLY THE NORTH TYNE.

XI.

THE FIRST FOUR BRETWALDAS (ELLE, CEAWLIN, ETHELBERT, REDWALD).

BEDE tells us in his "Ecclesiastical History" that seven princes at various times and in different places held the sovereignty or chieftainship[1] of the English kingdoms. The seven of his list are Elle of Sussex, Ceawlin of Wessex, Ethelbert of Kent, Redwald of East Anglia, Edwin, Oswald, and Oswin of Northumbria.

The title requires some explanation, an explanation which it is not easy to give without entering into a very difficult controversy. What the word itself means is not by any means certain. Even its derivation is a matter of dispute. About the latter half of it, indeed, all are agreed. *Walda* or *wealda* (for the word has the two forms) are clearly connected with our "wield." The "walda" was the "wielder" or "ruler." But "wielder" of what? "Bret" naturally suggests "Britain" or "Briton," words often spelt with an "e" instead of an "i." The Bretwalda, then,

[1] The two words used are *imperium* and *ducatus*, the latter obviously meaning much less than the former. "Empire" and "dukedom" are, etymologically, their English equivalents.

would be the ruler of Britain. But, on the other hand, it is maintained that "bret" is not the right form, which should rather be "bryt," connected with the word "bryten" "broad." According to this view, therefore, the Bretwalda would be the "wide ruler." Professor Freeman is disposed to think that this derivation is correct, but that nevertheless the word did mean, if not to those who first used it, at least in Bede's time, the "ruler of Britain."[1] Such incorrect uses of words are not uncommon in times when men knew little or nothing about the origin of the terms which they employ in common speech.[2] Of course, it may be asked, Did the English speak of the island of which they possessed themselves as "Britain"? The answer is—certainly not. But as soon as their history began to be written, being written in Latin, the word *Britannia* would come into common use again; a Latin writer such as Bede (672–735) might easily translate the word Bretwalda by "Britanniae imperator" or "dux" without thinking of the true derivation from "bryten."

It has been suggested that the English kings who used this title were thinking of the old title of Emperor, and were, in fact, claiming it for themselves,

[1] He mentions another form as being sometimes used "Bretæenwealda," in Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which would be almost conclusive on this point.

[2] The Latin adverb *equidem* is a case in point. Cicero, the highest in authority in all matters of Latin style, never uses it except with the first person singular, thinking, there can be very little doubt, that it was formed from the pronoun *ego* (I) and the adverb *quidem* (indeed). But, as a matter of fact, the word was not formed in this way, but from the interjection *e* and *quidem*. Cicero's usage, therefore, was guided by a mistaken etymology.

as Carausius and other pretenders had claimed it in the latter days of the Roman dominion. And the fact that Ethelbert of Kent had a coin struck with the Roman device of the wolf suckling two children [1] has been brought forward as a proof of some such pretensions. It is possible that Ethelbert, an ambitious prince, may have had some such notion suggested to him by the Gallic bishop who acted as his wife's chaplain, but it is more probable that the coin was only copied by unskilful artizans, who could not make a device of their own. Doubtless when in the ninth century Egbert, after making his supremacy to be acknowledged by all the English states, revived the title of Bretwalda, he was thinking of an Imperial dignity. But then Egbert had seen the great Charles crowned at Rome, and would have a special satisfaction in claiming for himself something like the Imperial dignity which he had seen revived in so splendid a way.

It is impossible to give any precise definition of the Bretwalda's power, either of its degree or of its extent. Both, we may be sure, varied with the princes who held it. Some of these could not have had anything like the power of some of the kings who were never honoured with this title.

What claims the first Bretwalda in Bede's list, Ella of Sussex, had to the dignity we have no means of knowing. Any supremacy he may have had outside his own dominions could not have extended beyond

[1] A picturing of the old legend which told how a she-wolf nourished Romulus and Remus, twin sons of Rhea Sylvia, and founders of Rome, when exposed in the marshes of Tiber.

the kingdom of Kent. But what his relations were with this kingdom, whether he did it any service which was thus acknowledged, is a matter upon which we can scarcely even form a guess.[1] But we may be sure that whatever his power was it did not extend beyond the south-eastern corner of the island.

Of Ceawlin of Wessex, the second Bretwalda, we have already heard something. In 568, nine years before his great victory at Dereham, he had defeated Ethelbert of Kent, who could then have been little more than a lad,[2] at Wimbledon, in Surrey. This defeat was probably followed by some acknowledgment of the supremacy of the West Saxon king, on the part of Ethelbert and his subjects. Ceawlin's career after the battle of Dereham is obscure. We hear of another victory at Frethern, darkened by the death of the conqueror's brother and probably his son ; and then under the year 592 we have this entry in the Chronicle : "In this year there was a great slaughter in Britain, at Woddesbeorg,[3] and Ceawlin was driven out." His successes—so much we may conjecture by the somewhat dubious help of later writers—had corrupted his character, and his own kindred rose against him. A league was formed with the British tribes against whom he had been fighting for so many years. It was joined, or encouraged, by Ethelbert of Kent, who had been strengthening himself in the east, while his

[1] Dr. Lappenberg (i. 127, Thorpe's translation) writes : "Sussex is said to have first enjoyed that supremacy when it had to defend Kent." But he gives no authority, a thing which he very seldom neglects.

[2] One text of the Saxon Chronicle gives the date of his birth at 552.

[3] Possibly Wanborough, in Wiltshire, about four miles from Swindon.

former overlord had been busy in the west, and who had now brought under his supremacy Sussex and Essex. Ceawlin died two years afterwards in exile. The words in which William of Malmesbury sums up the story of his reign are these : "In his last days banished from his kingdom he presented a pitiable spectacle to his enemies. So much hated was he that the signal, so to speak, sounded against him on both sides. The English and the Britons joined against him, and his army was put to flight at Wodnesdic. Thus in the thirty-first year of his reign he was stripped of his kingdom and forthwith died." Britons and English joining to get rid of an obnoxious ruler is another fact in the history and marks an advance. We may not admire the motives which brought these allies together, but it is clear that the dreadful exterminating wars of the earlier time are at an end.

We have now come to the third Bretwalda, Ethelbert of Kent. His early reign had been marked, we have seen, by a disastrous defeat. From this circumstances had given him the opportunity to recover, and he seems to have used it well. Of the facts of his reign we know little except that somewhere in the latter part of the sixth century he married the Princess Bertha, a daughter of Charibert, who became King of the Franks in 561, and that, owing to this alliance, he was, as the Chronicler tells us more than once, "the first of English kings to be baptized." But, thanks to Bede, who was naturally interested in the first Christian monarch, we have a clear idea of his power. That he exercised any control over the West Saxons we cannot suppose. We hear indeed

that "by the help of King Ethelbert, Augustine called to a conference learned men of the Britons," and he must have passed through Wessex to reach the place of meeting. But the Chronicler tells us of Ceolwulf, of Wessex, who came to the throne in 597, that he constantly strove and fought against either "the Angle race, or against the Welsh, or against the Picts, or against the Scots." Over the eastern side of the island, however, at least as far north as the Humber, his supremacy was undoubted. His sister, Ricula by name, was married to the king of the East Saxons, whose dominions comprised Essex, Hertfordshire, and Middlesex, and with Middlesex, of course, London, with its strong walls, its wealth, its numerous population. This alliance had probably something to do with the overlordship which Ethelbert undoubtedly exercised over his neighbours on the east. Of his relationship with Sussex we know nothing ; but this kingdom, small and isolated as it was, could hardly have maintained its independence. East Anglia, under its king, Redwald, of whom we shall hear more hereafter, paid him the same submission. We hear of Redwald as visiting Ethelbert's Court in 599, and ultimately through his persuasion, or, possibly, compulsion, receiving baptism. But his power spread beyond East Anglia as far as the Humber, "that great river," as Bede describes it, "by which the Northern are divided from the Southern Angles." How far in a westerly direction his power extended it is impossible to say. Mercia, the great kingdom of the Midlands, was not consolidated under a powerful king till after Ethelbert's death. The small states of which it was after-

ANGLO-SAXON POTTERY, FOUND IN NORFOLK, KENT, AND CAMBRIDGE.
(*From the original in the British Museum.*)

wards constituted probably owned his supremacy, and, for a time, that of the king who succeeded him in his position of overlord.

This position Ethelbert does not seem to have held up to the time of his death. This took place in the year 616 ; but by that time Redwald of East Anglia was Bretwalda. How power came to be thus transferred from one prince to another we cannot say, but we may safely guess that the new faith which Ethelbert had adopted, which he had pressed on Redwald, and which Redwald afterwards threw off, had something to do with it. Anyhow the last Anglian king appears as fourth on the list of Bretwaldas and holds the dignity till his death, an event of which we cannot fix the date, but which we may suppose not to have happened later than 620. Before his death, by a great victory over Ethelfrith, of Northumbria, he had established Edwin, the fifth Bretwalda, on the throne of that kingdom. Of this battle we shall hear more hereafter. But the politics of the English kingdoms are now becoming so closely connected with the struggles between Christianity and Paganism, that it is necessary to describe without any further delay how the faith which had been destroyed by the invaders, and which for a century could scarcely have had a single adherent in the eastern half of the island, again became supreme.

XII.

THE CONVERSION OF ENGLAND

THE England which was described in the last chapter was, without doubt, a pagan country. In a few spots here and there some scattered survivors of the conquered race may have cherished some recollection of their old faith ; but nowhere was it openly professed, and in some places it was absolutely forgotten. The independent Britons of the West held aloof from the heathen invaders, whom they regarded, to use the language of one of their writers, as "hateful to God and man."[1] The more zealous Christians of Ireland and Scotland, of whose missionary spirit St. Patrick and St. Aidan may be taken as examples, may have done something to touch the heathen nearest to their own borders. But the work of conversion had substantially to be done anew.

It was done by two sets of workers, one coming from Rome, the other from the native churches.

The story of the Roman missionaries is easily told, for we have a clear and trustworthy record of it. It runs thus :

Somewhere about the year 580, almost the time

[1] Gildas.

when the English conquest reached its first stage, one Gregory, a noble Roman, abbot of a monastery which he had himself founded, passing through the slave-market of Rome, was attracted by the fair faces and flaxen hair of some youths exposed for sale. "Who are these?" he asked of the slave-dealer. "They come from Britain." "Are they Christians or Pagans?" "Pagans." "Alas! that men so bright of face should be possessed of the author of darkness! of what tribe are they?" "Angles." "Well called, for they have the faces of angels, and should be co-heirs with the angels in heaven. But, from what province do they come?" "They are Deiri." "It is well, rescued from the wrath of God[1] and made Christians." A few days afterwards he set out with some of his monks on a missionary journey to the people of whom he had thus heard. But the Romans had learnt to love him so well that they compelled him to return. For nearly twenty years his plan had to be put aside. Even when in 590 he became Pope, other more pressing matters claimed his attention. At last, in 595, the time seemed to have come. He chose from among the monks of his old monastery a certain Augustine, and sent him with some companions to do the work from which he had been himself hindered. The little company set out; but when they reached Gaul they heard such terrifying accounts of the savagery of the English that Augustine returned to Rome to beg that they might be released from their task. Gregory refused. "The more difficult the labour the greater the reward," was his answer. Then they went on, but

[1] "*De ira* eruti."

slowly. It was not till 597 that they landed at Ebbesfleet,[1] in the Isle of Thanet.

They had chosen their place prudently. Ethelbert, King of Kent, had married, as has been before stated, a Christian princess. It had been agreed that the Queen should be allowed to follow her own religion; she had a chaplain, Luidhard, Bishop of Senlis; and the old Roman-British Church of St. Martin, in Canterbury, had been assigned for the Christian worship. Ethelbert received Augustine's messengers courteously, and promised to give him the interview for which he asked. Only he stipulated that the meeting must take place in the open air. He feared the power of the spells which the strangers might be able to use were he to talk to them under a roof.

The King and the missionaries met under an oak held sacred by the people of the country. Augustine did his best to make the scene impressive. He came up from the shore in solemn procession. A cross-bearer carried in front a large cross of silver. Next came another attendant bearing a picture of Christ, richly worked on a panel with gold and colours. Behind came the rest of the company, chanting a litany in which they besought the mercy of God on the people of Kent and themselves. The King knew no Latin; the missionaries could not speak English. But some priests who had come with Augustine from Gaul interpreted his words when he explained what the Christ whose picture they saw had come to do. Ethelbert answered that the promises of the strangers

[1] The place where Hengist and Horsa are said to have landed.

sounded well. He could not undertake to leave the faith and customs of his fathers, but his people might do as they thought best. He invited the missionaries to come back with him to his capital town of Canterbury. There they were permitted to worship in the Church of St. Martin.

Their success was rapid. They had landed, it would seem, in the early spring of 697, and on June 2nd (which was the festival of Whitsunday) the King was baptized. His zeal and liberality were remarkable. He gave up to Augustine his own palace, and helped him in other ways most effectually.

Augustine naturally looked for the help of the British churches. This hope was disappointed, probably from faults on both sides. The Roman missionary considered that the native bishops owed him obedience as having been put under his care by Pope Gregory. His chief demands were that they should follow the Roman time of keeping Easter, and that they should help in preaching to the English. The first meeting had no result. At a second seven British bishops and the Abbot of Bangor came to confer with Augustine. On their way they had asked the advice of a hermit. "Shall we change the customs of our fathers?" "Yes, if the newcomer be a man of God." "How shall we know whether he be such or no?" "The Lord said, 'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.' If this Augustine be meek and lowly, be sure that he beareth the yoke of Christ." "But how shall we know this?" "If he rise to meet you when you approach, hear and follow him; but if he

despise you and rise not, reject him." Augustine, looking upon himself as superior in rank, remained seated: and the British bishops refused to yield to his demands "If he will not rise up to greet us," they said, "how much more will he despise us, if we yield to him." Augustine was greatly enraged. "If ye will not have peace with your brethren, ye shall have war with your enemies. If ye will not preach the way of life to the English, ye shall suffer death at their hands." These were words which soon had a terrible fulfilment, and were afterwards believed to have been spoken with a sinister meaning.

Among the English themselves Augustine had more success. Another bishopric was founded at Rochester, and the whole of Kent soon became Christian. The small kingdom of Essex, then ruled by Sebert, a nephew of King Ethelbert, accepted the new faith; and London, its capital, became the seat of a bishop. Mellitus, one of a company sent out by Gregory in 601, to reinforce Augustine, was the first to occupy the see.

The next conquest was Northumbria. Here, Edwin, son of Ella, and rightful heir, had been dispossessed by his neighbour Ethelfrith. The boy—he was but three years old—had been brought up by a British king. His protector was defeated in a battle fought near Chester by Ethelfrith.[1] Edwin fled, first to

[1] It was after this battle that the prophecy of Augustine found a terrible fulfilment. The monks of Bangor stood on a neighbouring hill, watching the struggle, and offering up prayers for the success of their countrymen. The battle over, the King of Northumbria inquired who they were. When he was told, he said, "If they cry to their God against us, and load us with imprecations, then, though unarmed, they fight against us," and commanded that they should be put to death.

Mercia, and then to Redwald, King of East Anglia. To two requests of Ethelbert that the fugitive should be given up, Redwald returned a refusal. A third, strengthened by a great bribe and by a threat of war, he made up his mind to grant. A friend warned Edwin of his danger, but he refused to fly. "I will not break my compact," he said, "with a king who has not harmed me. If I am to die, let him rather than a less noble hand deliver me to death? And whither can I flee, I, who have wandered through all the provinces of Britain?"

The friend departed, and the prince sat down on a stone in front of the palace. A stranger came up and asked him, "Why do you wake when others sleep? Think not, however, that I do not know the care of your waking. Say, then, what reward will you give to him who shall deliver you from these cares, and persuade Redwald not to give you into the hand of your enemies?" "He shall have all the gratitude of my heart." "And what if he shall promise that you shall destroy your adversaries and be more powerful, not only than your forefathers, but than any English king?" "I will give myself to him." "And if he tell you of doctrines of life and salvation better than aught your fathers have heard, will you listen to him?" "I will." Then the stranger laid his hand on Edwin's head, and said, "When this sign shall be repeated, remember this sign and this hour, and fulfil what you now promise." With these words the stranger, it is said, vanished. Shortly afterwards, Edwin's friend returned with the news that Redwald, persuaded by his queen, had refused the offers of

Ethelfrid. Nor was this all ; he marched against the usurper, and defeated him in a bloody battle on the eastern bank of the Idle.[1] Edwin thus regained his paternal dominions. He declined, however, to receive baptism, notwithstanding the persuasions of his Christian wife, Ethelburga, daughter of Ethelbert of Kent, and her adviser, Paulinus. But when he had narrowly escaped assassination at the hand of an emissary of the King of Wessex and was further touched by the danger of his wife, who was delivered of a daughter a few hours after the attempt, he could resist no longer. He was in this mood when Paulinus, so runs the story, approached him, laid his hand upon his head, and asked him whether he recognized the sign. The King at once promised to receive the faith, and assembled his council to discuss the matter with them. Coifi, the high priest, when asked for his opinion, declared that in his opinion the old gods were nothing worth. "No one," he said, "has been more zealous for them than I, yet many have received greater rewards and attained more success." Another noble answered the king's question in a famous apologue. "This life, O King, in comparison with the time that is hidden from us, seems to be such as this. When you are sitting in your hall at your meal in the winter time, with your nobles about you and a fire in the midst, a sparrow flies quickly through, entering at one door and passing out by the other. So it goes from storm to storm. Such is the life of man. If this doctrine tells us anything more certain, let us

[1] The Idle rises five miles from Retford, and flows into the Trent a few miles below Gainsborough.

receive it." Paulinus now delivered a discourse, in which he set forth the Christian faith. The King and all his nobles received it, Coifi setting the example of profaning the temples in which he had ministered.

East Anglia was the next kingdom to become Christian. Redwald had received baptism in Kent, persuaded or compelled by his overlord, King Ethelbert, and had introduced the new faith into his kingdom. But the heathen party, led, it is said, by his queen, were too strong for him. He endeavoured to compromise matters by setting up altars to the old gods in the churches which he dedicated to Christian worship. His son, Earpwarld, was a more consistent believer, as after his death was also his brother Sigebert. Felix, a native of Burgundy, who had been sent by Honorius, Archbishop of Canterbury, was the chief instrument in the conversion of this region, and has consequently received the title of the Apostle of East Anglia. He fixed his bishop's seat at Dunwich, on the coast of Suffolk, then and afterwards a prosperous town with many churches, now reduced by the inroads of the sea to a petty village.

It must not be supposed that the progress of Christianity went on without interruption. In Kent itself there had been a relapse into Paganism when Ethelbert was succeeded (in 617) by his son Eadbald. The same change took place in Essex, and Mellitus was driven away from his see of London. At one time it seemed as if the whole work of Augustine was to be abandoned. Archbishops Laurentius, Mel-

litus, and Justus of Rochester, agreed to leave the country, and the two latter actually departed. Bede thus relates what followed. Laurentius, left alone, slept in his cathedral church. There St. Peter appeared to him, reproved him for his faithlessness, and enforced his reproof by a severe scourging. The next morning the Archbishop presented himself before the King. "Who," said Eadbald, "has dared so to treat a person of your consideration?" Then Laurentius told him what he had seen and suffered. Something, it is certain, changed the King's feelings. He embraced the faith which before he had always rejected, and Kent remained thenceforth steadily Christian. The re-conversion of Essex was longer delayed.

In Northumbria the work of Paulinus was wholly undone. Edwin fell in battle (633), and his kingdom relapsed into paganism.

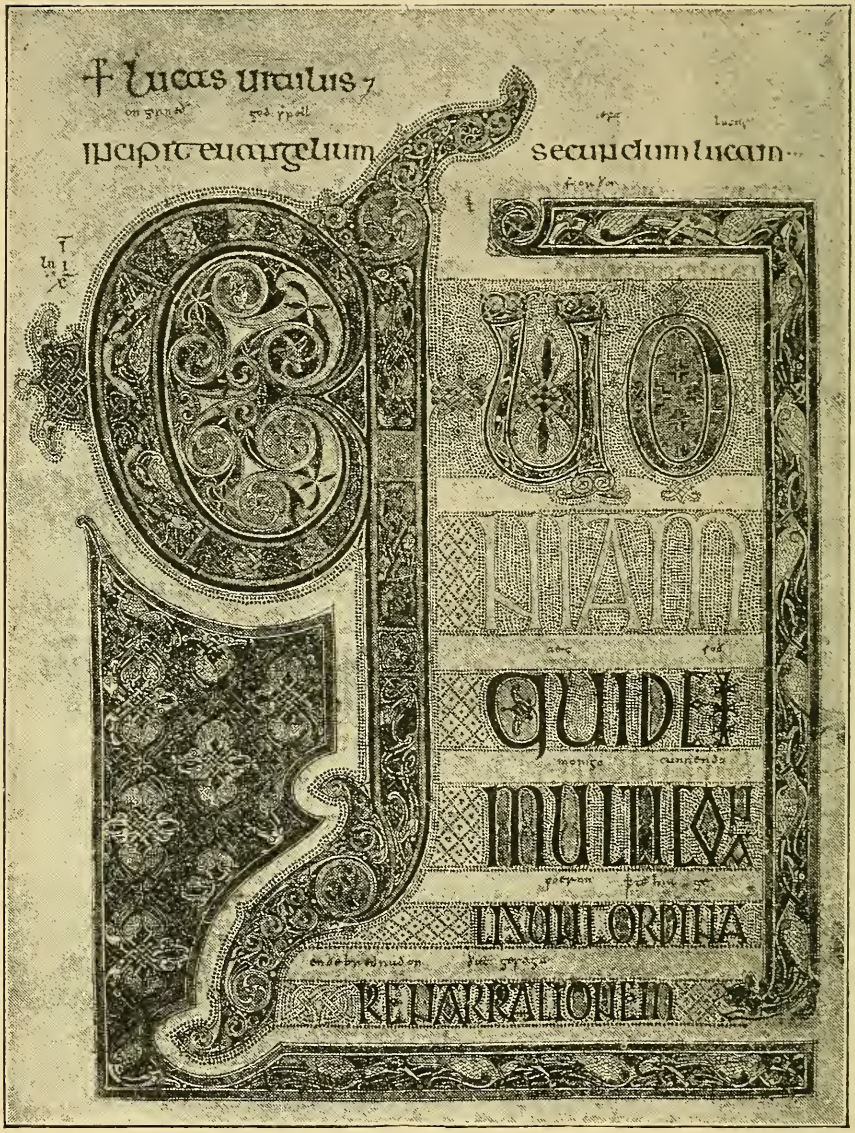
Here comes in the work of the Celtic missionaries. It may be said, indeed, that Kent and East Anglia (to which, perhaps, Essex should be added) were the only permanent results of the mission of Augustine. In Northumbria Oswald, who during the reign of Edwin had been baptized and instructed by the monks of Iona, when restored to his kingdom, begged his old teachers to send him a missionary, who might help to re-convert his people. A certain Corman was despatched. He was a man of stern temper, and lacked the gift of persuasiveness. Returning to those who had sent him, and reporting that the English were hopelessly obstinate, he was told by Aidan, one of the assessors of the synod,

that his own severity had been in fault. Aidan himself was then sent, and was settled by King Oswald in the island of Lindisfarne, off the coast of Northumbria. It is to Aidan and his associates, among whom the King, himself a most zealous Christian, must rank first, that the permanent conversion of Northumbria was due.

Mercia, under its king, Penda, long remained obstinately heathen. The wars which this savage monarch waged with his neighbours seemed to have had, for one at least of their motives, a hatred of the Christian faith. But Penda himself, before his death in 655, felt that the new faith was growing too strong for him. All his children seems to have been Christians, and his son Peada brought back with him from Northumbria, where he had married a daughter of King Edwy, four missionaries. The old king was now willing to tolerate the Christian faith, but he was always, it is said, most impatient of those whose practice did not agree with their profession. After his death the work of conversion went on rapidly.

The spread of Christianity in Wessex is connected with the name of Birinus, a Benedictine monk from Rome, who went there in 634, by the advice, it is said, of Pope Honorius (625–638). Birinus was helped by Oswald of Northumbria and, probably, by missionaries from the Northumbrian Church. He was able to convert King Cynegils, and founded his bishop's see at the Oxfordshire Dorchester.

The last of the English kingdoms to give up Odin for Christ was Sussex. Wilfrid, a Northumbrian bishop, had been banished from his native country.



PAGE OF GOSPELS.

(*From the original MS.*)

and, after various wanderings, found himself, in 681, among the South Saxons. This people was still mainly heathen, though their king and his wife had been baptized, and a little settlement of Irish monks was endeavouring to spread the gospel. Wilfrid came at the right time. The country was desolated by famine, the result of a long drought, and the wretched people, who were very backward in knowledge of common life, were in large numbers putting an end to their own lives. Wilfrid taught them to use nets for sea-fishing, and thus put them in the way of obtaining an ample provision of food. Finally, he persuaded a number of them to receive the rite of baptism. It so happened that on the very day when this ceremony was solemnly performed, the long drought came to an end. Before long all Sussex had become Christian.

Thus within a century the work which had been begun at Ebbesfleet, in 597, was brought to an end.

XIII.

THE NORTHUMBRIAN BRETWALDAS.

THE story of Edwin of Northumbria, fifth on Bede's list of Bretwaldas, has already been told in part, chiefly in its bearing on the progress of the Christian faith. Something remains to be said of his position as overlord of England. It was his claim to this dignity that brought him into the danger of assassination from which he so narrowly escaped.[1] The assassin was sent by a West Saxon king, who hoped thus to rid himself of a rival who was growing dangerously powerful. The treacherous plot—for the man had come in the guise of a peaceable envoy—was fully punished. Edwin, as soon as he was recovered from his wound, and had eased his conscience by fulfilling his long-delayed purpose of baptism, marched against Wessex, and amply avenged the wrong that had been done him. Elsewhere, too, he displayed his power. As the Chronicler somewhat strangely puts it, "he ravaged all Britain, save Kent only." And from Kent he had taken, as we have seen, his second wife. His conquests, too, are said to

[1] See p. 126.

have extended both westward and northward. His name is still preserved in the city—Edinburgh—which marked the northern limit of his dominion. At Chester, in the west, he built a fleet, with which he subdued the two Monas, Man and Anglesey. At home peace and order prevailed. The laws were so strictly enforced that theft and violence became unknown. "In the days of Edwin," says Bede, "a woman with a babe at her breast might have travelled over the island without suffering harm." The highways, thus made safe, were also furnished with the "drinking fountains," a convenience which we have only now again begun to erect. "He placed cisterns of stone at convenient intervals to collect water from the nearest springs, and attached to them cups of brass for the refreshment of the passers-by." In his own person he made more show of royal state than had any of the princes before him. It is possible that he had some thought in his mind of the Roman dominion when he had carried before him the Roman *tufa*, a globe, or, as some think, a bunch of feathers attached to a spear.

Edwin's reign lasted for sixteen years. But during the latter part of this period a formidable rival had been gathering strength. In the year before that in which Edwin was baptized, Penda, grandson of Crida of Mercia, and twelfth in descent from Woden, came to the throne of Mercia. He "held the kingdom thirty winters," a long reign mainly spent in unceasing hostility to the Christian faith. We next find him doing battle with the King of Wessex at Cirencester, in Gloucestershire, and coming to an agreement

with them. With his southern border thus secure, he turned to the west, and found an ally in Cadwalla, King of North Wales.[1] Cadwalla was presumably a Christian, but he seems to have had no scruple in allying himself with a pagan for the conquest of a dangerous neighbour (we have already heard in this chapter of Edwin's conquests in Wales). Penda and Cadwalla encountered Edwin at a place which is called in the Chronicle Heathfield, and which has been identified, not, one would think, with much probability, with Hatfield Chase in Hertfordshire. Edwin was defeated and slain. Penda did not feel himself strong enough to attempt the conquest of Northumbria, but turned his arms elsewhere. The English of Leicestershire and of Lincolnshire submitted to him, and he wrested from Wessex some of its territories. In fact, he busied himself with building up the powerful Mercia of which we shall hear so much hereafter. Northumbria, meanwhile, had leisure to recover itself. Oswy, a kinsman of Edwin, had been placed on the throne of Deira; and Eanfrid, eldest son of the Ethelfrid who had been the enemy of Edwin, to that of Bernicia. Both had been baptized, both relapsed into paganism, and both, it is said, perished by the hands of Cadwalla. The eyes of the people were then turned to Oswald, Eanfrid's younger brother. His first act was to march against the British princes, whom he found encamped at Hexham, near the Roman Wall. Oswald was a firm adherent to the faith which his kinsmen had deserted.

[1] "North Wales," it will be remembered, was so called to distinguish it from West Wales, the south-western portion of the island.

He bade his followers make a cross of wood, and fix it when made in the ground. He is said to have held it with his own hands till the hole in which it was to stand was filled in with earth. Then turning to his men he said, "Soldiers, let us bend our knees, and beg of the true and living God to protect us from the insolence and fierceness of our enemies, for he knows that our cause is just." He then bade them kneel down and pray. In the battle that followed the soldiers of the cross, though far inferior in numbers to their enemies, were completely victorious. Cadwalla fell on the field of battle. After the victory, Oswald's right to reign over the two kingdoms was no longer doubted. He inherited, too, something, we cannot say how much, of his predecessor's superiority,[1] and stands accordingly sixth in Bede's list of the Bretwaldas.

Oswald's reign was short, lasting only for nine years, or, eight only, if we exclude "the unhappy year," as it was afterwards called, when paganism was in the ascent. He was overthrown by the same king who had defeated and slain Edwin. The struggle was for East Anglia, if it did not actually take place in that region, and it was, in its chief motive, a struggle of the old faith against the new. East Anglia had acknowledged the supremacy of Oswald, and Penda of Mercia marched into it. The East Anglian king, Sigebert, had retired into monastery; but the people

[1] We hear of his standing sponsor for Cynegils of Wessex, and of his confirming, in the character of Bretwalda, that prince's gift of Dorchester (of the Thame) to Birinus. Bede also speaks of his having compelled the Picts and Scots to do him homage.

insisted that he should leave his cell to lead them into battle. He so far consented that he joined the army, but he refused to carry any arms. He was slain in the battle, his army was routed, and his kingdom passed for a time into the hands of Penda. Oswald marched against the conqueror, and met him at Maserfield, a place which has been variously located at Oswestry in Shropshire, Winwick in Lancashire, and Mirfield in Yorkshire. The battle went against the Northumbrians, and Oswald [1] was slain, exclaiming, it is said, with his last breath, "Lord, have mercy on the souls of my people."

Penda marched eastward, ravaging as he went, till he came to the strong fortress of Bamborough. Unable to take it by assault, he had a vast pile of combustibles heaped up by its walls, and set fire to. It was through the prayers of St. Aidan, as the legend goes on to say, that the direction of the wind was suddenly changed, and the place saved. Oswald died in 642, and was succeeded by his brother Oswy, seventh and last of the Bretwaldas.

For some time Oswy seemed to have little claim to the rank or power implied in this title. He had troubles at home. He had to divide Northumbria

[1] A beautiful story is told of Oswald. Sitting one day at the table with St. Aidan, he was told that a crowd of poor was waiting at his gate and asking for alms. The king commanded that the dishes, of which the guests had not yet begun to partake, should be divided among the poor, and even broke up into small pieces the great silver dish which had been placed before him, and distributed the fragments. The saint caught the king's right hand in his own and said, "May the hand that has done this thing never decay!" and when, by Penda's orders, the limbs of the dead king were exposed on stakes till they rotted, the hand which had been thus blessed was found uncorrupted.

with a rival belonging to the ancient house of Ella, Oswin by name. For six years Oswin ruled Deira, and when, after an unsuccessful rebellion against his superior, he was put to death, was succeeded by a son of Oswald. The death of Oswin took place in 651. Penda, too, was growing more powerful. He had subjugated Wessex, and had even induced its king to renounce Christianity. When he threatened Northumbria, and indeed went so far as to invade it, he was bought off by presents, and by the surrender of hostages. Alliances, too, of marriage, knit the two kingdoms more closely together. The eldest son of Oswy married the daughter of Penda, and Penda's son, Peada, became the husband of his daughter, after having first received baptism. But Penda, though in his latter years he showed something like tolerance of the new faith, could not submit to the supremacy of a Christian overlord, and such a supremacy seemed at hand. In 655 (he was then nearly eighty years old) he marched into Northumbria, and met Oswy near Leeds. The Northumbrian vainly endeavoured to appease him with gifts and offers of submission. He declared that nothing would satisfy him but the extermination of the whole nation. The battle was long and furious. Thirty chieftains, British and English, had followed Penda to the battle, and of these two only survived, one of them being a Northumbrian chieftain who had gone over to the enemy, but who, on the morning of the battle, repented of his treachery. The old king was swept from the field by the crowd of fugitives. Many perished in the battle and in the field ; many more in

the river Aire, which was then in flood. Its waters were afterwards said to have avenged the five kings, who had perished by the sword of the old pagan. Two events quickly followed on Penda's death. Mercia became Christian, and Oswy's dignity as Bretwalda became a reality.

For some years Mercia seems to have been actually subject to the Northumbrian king, and to have been governed by his deputies. Then the Mercian nobles took Wulfere, youngest son of Penda, who had been living in concealment, and put him on the throne. The Middle Angles and Lincolnshire returned to their allegiance. We hear, too, of domestic strife in Oswy's family, his son claiming an independent kingdom, and even turning, or threatening to turn, his arms against his father. Another trouble which came upon him in his later years was the great pestilence that raged through the island in 664. In 670 he died, and was succeeded by Egferth, his son. A few words will now suffice to finish the story of Northumbria as the leading power in England. At first, Egferth inherited the power and more than the power of his father. Wulfere of Mercia was compelled to own his superiority, and to surrender to him the newly occupied districts of Mid Anglia and Lincolnshire. Then he attacked the Welsh tribes on his north-western borders, and added the whole or part of the ancient British kingdom of Cambria to his dominions. In the pride of his success he resolved to push his conquests still further. He marched into the territory of the Picts, who occupied the country north of a line between the Clyde and the Forth, where

the wall of Severus had once stood. The Pictish king retired before the invaders till they were entangled in the mountains. Then he turned upon them. The battle was fought at a place which is called Dumnechtan by Bede. Egferth and his Northumbrians were defeated, it may be said, cut to pieces. Scarcely a messenger escaped to tell the tidings of disaster at his home. The king was buried at Iona. With his fall on May 20, 685, the history of Northumbria comes practically to an end.

XIV.

THE SUPREMACY OF MERCIA.

SOMETHING has been said of Wulfere, son and successor of Penda, in the preceding chapter; of the changes of fortune which befell him in his dealings with Northumbria, and which caused him, first to recover, and then to lose again, power which his father had held. Much the same thing happened to him in relation to Wessex. Cenwalh, king of that country, had been driven from his dominions by Penda, "because he had forsaken his sister." On Penda's death, after an exile of three years, he returned, and began at once to extend his power westwards by attacks upon the Welsh. In 661 he came into collision with Wulfere, who defeated him at Partesbury, in Shropshire. The Mercians ravaged the country of the West Saxons as far as Ashdown. Curiously enough, when we remember what had been the conduct of Penda, this victory of Mercia helped forward the spread of Christianity. The King of Sussex was persuaded or constrained to accept the new faith, and Wulfere, who had stood sponsor for him at his baptism, bestowed upon his godson the Isle of Wight, which he had recently conquered. That a Mercian king should bestow the sovereignty

of the Isle of Wight at his pleasure shows how complete was his mastery over his southern neighbours. Before his death, which happened in 675, after a battle with the West Saxons at Bedwin,[1] Wulfere's power had greatly declined in the South as well as in the North.

Ethelred, brother and successor of Wulfere, seems to have recovered much that his predecessor had lost. We hear of him ravaging Kent, struggling with Egfrid of Northumbria for the middle region of England, and finally, in 704, resigning his crown to become a monk. He died twelve years afterwards, Abbot of Bardney, in Lincolnshire.

Ethelred's successor, Ceonred, son of Wulfere, followed his example of retiring from his throne. In 709, when his cousin Ceolred, son of Ethelred, was old enough to reign, he went on a pilgrimage to Rome, received the monastic habit from the Pope of that time, and died shortly afterwards in that city.

In Coelred's short reign (709–716) there seems to have been a decline in the Mercian power, due, perhaps, to the character of the king. He seems to have been a man of violent temper and evil life. Wessex appears no longer as an inferior power, but as contending with Mercia on equal terms. The two met in battle at Wednesbury, in Shropshire. Both sides claimed the victory, which, however, inclined to the West Saxons. This was in 715 ; the next year, Ceolred was smitten with sudden madness as he was feasting with his thanes, and died very soon after.

[1] Biedanheafod in the Chronicle. Bedwin is on the edge of Savernake Forest, in Wiltshire.

Ceolred's successor, Ethelbald, was descended from a brother of Penda. He had been banished, or had fled from the kingdom to save his life, and had taken refuge with Guthlac, a famous hermit, himself a prince of the royal house of Mercia, who had fixed his cell at Croyland, in Lincolnshire. Guthlac had comforted him in his day of trouble with the assurance that the day of better things would come before long, and the promise was now fulfilled, for the Mercian nobles called him to the empty throne. His long reign of forty-one years was a struggle for the supremacy of England; and showed the same variety of fortune that we see in the earlier efforts of the same kind. None of the English kingdoms were yet strong enough to keep as well as to gain this position of command. The Chronicle, at this time always a meagre record, says very little about Mercia; but under the year 732 we find "Ethelbald captured Somerton," doubtless the town from which Somersetshire took its name, and therefore in the heart of Wessex. This victory seems to be, so to speak, the high-water mark of his power. Ethelbald now described himself as "King, not of the Mercians only, but of all the neighbouring peoples who are called by the common name of Southern English." To this dominion he wished to add that of Northern England. In 735 we are told that "he ravaged the land of the Northumbrians." More he was not able to do. And it was not long before his power in the South was broken. The scanty records of the Chronicle are a little perplexing. They seem to point to a war succeeded

by an alliance. In 741 "Cuthred succeeded to the kingdom of the West Saxons, and held it for sixteen years, and he warred boldly against the Mercians." Two years afterwards we read: "Ethelbald, King of the Mercians, and Cuthred, King of the West Saxons, fought against the Welsh." It is possible that in the earlier of these two entries the Chronicler is anticipating an event which really belonged to a later period in the new king's reign, but which he mentions at once, because it was chief title to be remembered. In 751 Ethelbald invaded Wessex with a numerous army, in which he had enrolled, besides his own people, men of Kent, East Saxons, and East Angles. The West Saxons met him at Burford, in Oxfordshire. Ingulphus[1] tells a picturesque story, which bears, indeed, a suspicious resemblance to an incident of the later history of how Edilhun, a gigantic West Saxon, bearing in his hand the golden dragon which was the cognizance of his race, struck down the standard-bearers of the Mercian host, and how, later in the day, when chance brought Ethelbald and the West Saxon champion together, the King turned and fled, and so decided the fate of the battle. Three years afterwards we hear of another battle at Seekington, in Warwickshire, in which King Ethelbald was slain. It is significant that the scene of the war is now transferred to Mercian territory.[2]

The Chronicler thus continues the history:—

[1] See Preface.

[2] Lingard thinks that the battle of Seekington was not fought between Mercians and West Saxons, but between Ethelbald and a pretender to the throne, the Beornred who succeeded him.

"Beornred succeeded to the kingdom, and held it a little while, and unhappily; and in the same year Offa drove out Beornred, and succeeded to the kingdom, and held it thirty-nine winters."

Offa is, with the possible exception of Penda, the greatest figure among the Mercian kings. A romantic story is told how that he was born blind, how, as years went on, it was found that he was dumb and a cripple, and how he gained sight and speech and activity when he had to deliver his native land from the usurpations of Beornred. He belonged to the royal house, being descended from Eawa, a brother of Penda.

Offa at once set himself to recover the supremacy which had been lost for a time by the defeat at Burford. We first find him contending with the Hastingas, probably South Saxons who inhabited the district which still preserves their name under the form of Hastings. Then he turned his arms against Kent. In the year 773 "the Mercians and the Kentish men fought at Otford."[1] The result of the battle was a decided victory for Offa. Before long he felt himself strong enough to grapple with the great power of Southern England, for in 777 Cynewulf [King of Wessex] and Offa fought at Benson or Bensington,[2] and Offa took the town." The town was one of the residences of the West Saxon kings, and the event marks a distinct advance of Mercian power.

[1] Otford is on the Darent, about three miles north of Sevenoaks.

[2] Benson is now a little village on the Thames, not far from the town of Wallingford, in Berkshire.

His next campaign was against his British neighbours on the West. And in this he won a victory which has left a memorable trace behind it in the work known as Offa's Dyke, the remains of which are still to be seen.[1] He had conquered the king of the region of Powys, taking from him his capital of Shrewsbury, then called Pengwern. This country he peopled with English settlers, and for their protection he made a rampart and ditch which reached from the Severn to the Dee. Some kind of acknowledgment of superiority seems also to have been made by the kings of Northumbria, but we hear of no expedition of Offa in that direction.

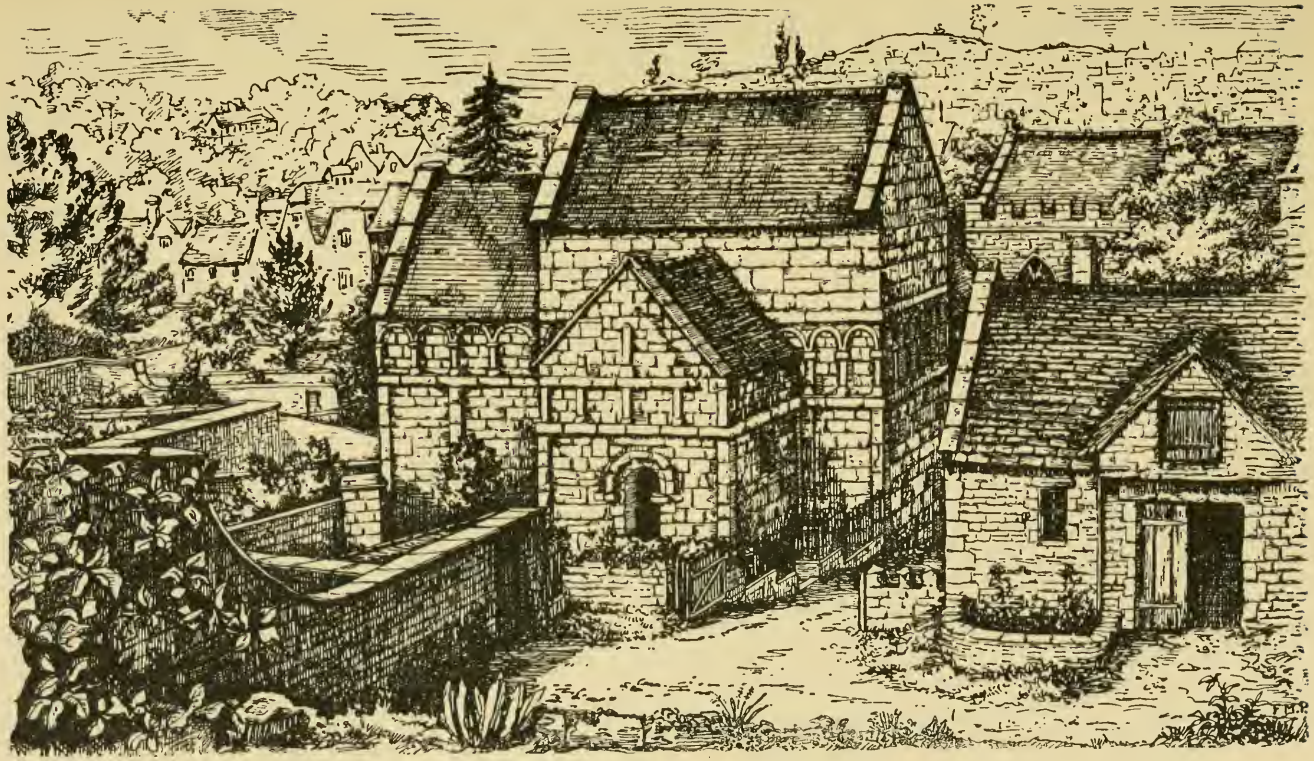
But the most remarkable proof of Offa's eminence is the attention which his proceedings attracted from Charles the Great. We are told that when he was invading Kent he was met by the messengers of Charles, whose help had been asked by the Kentish king, and commanded to stop his advance. The command was, as has been seen, unheeded. But not long after we find Charles sending a friendly letter, with costly presents, to "the most powerful ruler of the West," as he styles him.[2] Offa sent presents in return, and we find him sanctioning a conveyance of land made by one of his subjects in favour of the

[1] Kington, in Herefordshire, is one of the places where the "Dyke" is still to be seen. The line which it took is different from the present boundary between England and Wales, but not to any great extent. It may be said that substantially pushed back the Welsh within the limits which they still occupy.

[2] We have these and other particulars from Alcuin, a great scholar of Northumbrian birth, who for many years was attached to the Court of Charles the Great, or employed by him on various missions.

Abbey of St. Denis, and the gift by another, Alderman of Sussex, of the revenues from the harbours of Hastings and Pevensey. On the other hand, we hear of offences given by the English king to the pride of the great king. Charles asked for his son of the same name the hand of one of Offa's daughters. Offa returned for answer that he could grant it only on the condition that his son Egferth should be allowed to marry Bertha, Charles's own daughter. The demand, for some reason which it is not very easy to see, was considered to offend against the dignity of the Frankish king. Relations between the two Courts were broken off for a time, and threats were made that all trade between England and French ports would be stopped. Thanks to Gerwold, a Churchman, who was then in charge of the French customs, and Alcuin, who naturally acted as mediator between his host and his countrymen, a good understanding was restored.

In another direction Offa made an effort to strengthen his position, which, had it been successful, must have had most important consequences. One obstacle to Mercia becoming the chief state in England was the disposition of ecclesiastical power. The primacy of the English Church was settled at Canterbury in a state remote from Mercia, and owning a special allegiance to Wessex. If any prelate could dispute the superiority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, it was the Archbishop of York, and York was in Northumbria. Offa, accordingly, conceived the idea of founding an archbishopric in his own dominions which should take the first place. He



CHAPEL AT BRADFORD-ON-AVON.

(*Earliest Anglo-Saxon building extant.*)

sent an embassy to the Pope (Adrian I.), arguing that the Mercian bishops should be subject to a Mercian head, and proposing an arrangement by which Rochester, London, Selsey (Chichester), Winchester, and Sherburne (Salisbury), should be left suffragans of Canterbury, while all the sees between the Thames and the Humber should be subjected to the new Archbishopric of Lichfield. The Pope gave his consent to the plan, and sent the pall, the symbol of archiepiscopal authority, to Adulph, Bishop of Lichfield. The concession was acknowledged by the promise of a yearly gift of three hundred and sixty-five mancuses[1] to the Holy See. The arrangement lasted but a short time, and Canterbury regained, and has ever since retained, its old honours.

Family alliances were another way in which Offa sought to extend his power, but they had unhappy results. Elfleda, who married the king of Northumbria, shortly became a widow. Eadburga, the wife of Brehtric, king of the West Saxons, poisoned her husband by a draught which she intended for his favourite.[2] The story of the third daughter, Edelfrida, is not less tragical. Ethelbert, the young king of East Anglia, came to the Mercian Court to sue for

[1] A *mancus* was equal to thirty pennies.

[2] Eadburga is said to have fled to the Court of Charles the Great. Charles is said to have asked her whether she would have his son or himself for a husband. She answered that she preferred the son. "If you had chosen me," answered the king, "you should have had my son." Afterwards he made her abbess of a nunnery. From this she was expelled for misconduct, and finally she died a beggar in the city of Pavia.

her hand. His mother had vainly warned him of his danger ; but the friendly letters of Offa and the safe conduct which he sent had made him neglect her advice. He was hospitably received. But at night, when he had retired to his chamber, a messenger came summoning him to an interview with the king, who desired, he said, to confer with him on some matter of importance. The young man followed the messenger without suspicion. On his way he was assassinated. The princess whom he had sought in marriage retired from her father's Court, and spent the remainder of her days in the nunnery at Croyland. Offa protested his innocence of this atrocious crime, and honoured the murdered man by erecting a splendid tomb over his remains in the church of Hereford. But the common voice fixed the guilt of the deed upon him, and attributed to the vengeance which followed it the utter destruction of his house.

Two years afterwards he died. His son Egferth, who had been associated in the kingdom nine years before, succeeded him, but died within half a year of his accession. Thus the race of Offa became extinct. Even the bones of the king, it was commonly believed, were not permitted to remain in peace. A flood swept them away from the chapel, near Bedford on the Ouse, in which they had been buried.

Of Offa's successor, Cenwulf, little need be said. He retained his supremacy over Kent, reducing that kingdom to subjection when it rebelled against him. But the scheme of the Lichfield primacy was given up, and Canterbury regained its old honours. The Chronicler tells us that he treated the rebel king of

Kent with great severity.[1] But generally he was a wise and prudent sovereign. But the days of Mercian superiority were over. Not many years after his death, which took place in 719, the pre-eminence passed, as we shall see, to Wessex.

[1] It is only fair to say that all the words which describe his acts of cruelty are not found in all MSS.

XV.

CAEDMON, BEDE, AND CUTHBERT.

It will be a relief to turn for a while from the record of battle, which makes up so large a portion of the story of these times, to say a few words about three men who may be said to represent the poetry, the general literature and science, and the religion of the old English people. For a more detailed account of these matters the reader must of course go elsewhere; but it will not be departing from the purpose of my "story" if I give a few pages to them here.

The story of Caedmon the Poet will be best introduced by giving some account of the place where he exercised his calling, and this account easily connects itself with the narrative which has already been given. Before the great battle which was to end in the defeat and death of Penda,[1] the Bretwalda Oswy had vowed that he would dedicate to the service of God his infant daughter Elfleda. The victory won, he gave over the child to the care of Hilda, Abbess of the convent of Hereten (Hartlepool), herself a lady of the royal house, and daughter of one of those who had

[1] See p. 137.

first followed Edwin of Northumbria in his acceptance of the Christian faith. A few years afterwards Hilda migrated with her young charge to a place further to the south, where she had acquired some land. The spot is now known by its Danish name of Whitby. It was then called by one that signified "the light on the hill." Here she founded, and ruled until her death in 680, the famous Abbey of Whitby. It was during the latter part of this period that Caedmon the Poet is supposed to have "flourished."

It is from Bede that we hear the story of how he got his calling to sing, for a calling it emphatically was.

He was a man of middle age, an uneducated peasant, "whose talk," as the author of the "Book of Wisdom" puts it, "had been of bullocks." Of all men he seemed the least likely to have in him any gift of song. He had never learnt any poem, and when at a feast the custom was observed that all should sing in their turn, he would quit his place when he saw the harp approaching, and go to his home. It was on such an occasion that he had quitted a merry company, going out to look after the beasts of burden—the horses and oxen—of the guests, of which he had undertaken the charge. As he slept, after doing his work, one stood by him, and said, "Caedmon, sing me something." "I cannot sing," said Caedmon, "and indeed I have come hither from the feast, because I could not sing." Then he who spake with him said again, "Yet you shall sing to me." 'What," said he, "shall I sing?" The other said, "Sing the origin of creatures." On hearing this

answer, he began forthwith to sing in praise of God the Creator verses of which this is the sense. "Now ought we to praise the Author of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator and His wisdom, the acts of the Father of glory—how He, through the Eternal God, became the Author of all wonder, the Almighty Guardian, who created for the sons of men first heaven, to be their roof, and then the earth." This is the meaning, but not the order, of the verses which he sang in his sleep.

In the morning the peasant, who had thus become a poet, went to the steward of the town lands, and told him of his vision and of the power which had thus been called out in him. The steward took him to Hilda the Abbess, and Hilda bade him tell her his dream and recite his verses in the presence of some men of learning whom she summoned to hear him. They all recognized the reality of his gift, but by way of further trial set him another task, a sacred history or doctrine which he was to turn into verse. This task he performed. Then the abbess advised that he should become a monk and enter the monastery. This he did, and in the monastery he spent the rest of his days, days which he occupied with this his calling of sacred song. For "he sang," says Bede, "of the creating of the earth, and the beginning of mankind, and of all the history of Genesis, and of the going out of Israel from Egypt, and of their entering into the Promised Land, and of many other histories of Holy Scripture, as of the Incarnation and Passion and Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and of the teaching

of the apostles. Also he made poems of the terror of the judgment to come, and of the terrors of hell, and of the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom."

He died, we may guess, in the year of Hilda's own death. For fourteen days he lay sick. Those about him did not think that the end was near, but he bade them carry him into the chamber to which, according to the custom of the monastery, the dying were removed. Then he asked whether they had the Holy sacrament at hand. They doubted whether he was so near to death as to need to take it. But he asked again for it; after forgiveness asked for himself from all whom he might have wronged, and in like manner given to all, he received the communion, and shortly afterwards passed peacefully away in his sleep.

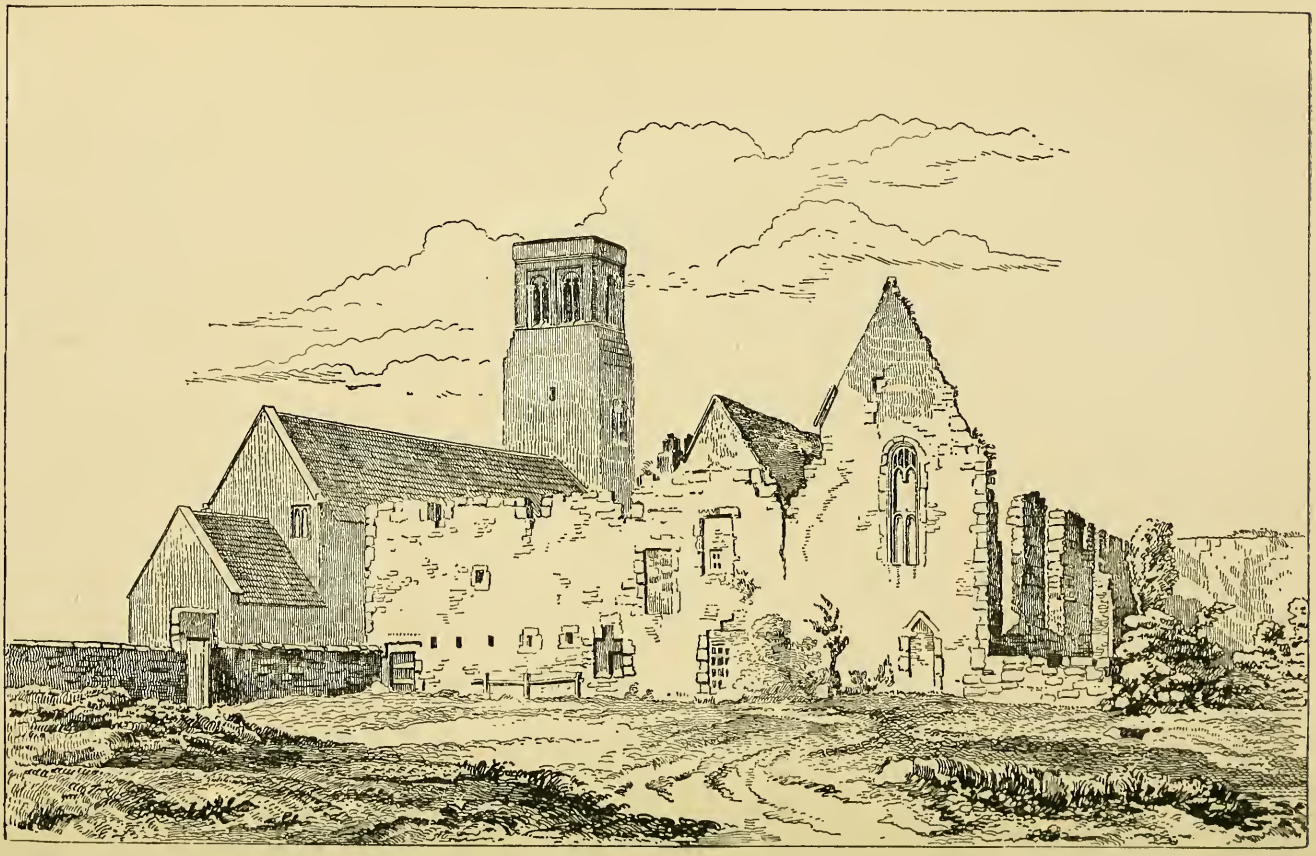
Criticism has been busy with the poem attributed to Caedmon, and has not come to any certain conclusion. Briefly stated, the matter stands thus: We have Bede's account, as given above, his paraphrase (in Latin) of some of Caedmon's verses, and his account of the whole poem. Then we have, in King Alfred's translation of Bede, some old English verses, which are probably a metrical rendering of Bede's prose, but which, it is possible, may be quoted from the original poem itself. Finally, we have a manuscript, dating from somewhere in the eleventh century, which contains such a poem as Caedmon is described as having written. Whether it is his, or imitated from his original, or written by some later poet on the lines laid down by Bede, are questions which are not to be discussed in this place. I shall content myself with giving some idea of this work—a great work, beyond

question, whoever may have been its author, which I quote from Professor Henry Morley's version :

"But after as before was peace in Heaven,
Fair rule of love ; dear unto all the Lord
Of Lords, the King of Hosts, to all His own,
And glories of the good who possessed joy
In Heaven the Almighty Father still increased.
Then peace was among dwellers in the sky,
Blaming and lawless malice were gone out,
And angels feared no more, since plotting foes,
Who cast off Heaven were bereft of light.
Their glory seats behind them in God's realm,
Enlarged with gifts, stood happy, bright with bloom.
But ownerless since the cursed spirits went
Wretched to exile within bars of Hell.
Then thought within His mind the Lord of Hosts
How He again might fix within His rule
The great creation, thrones of heavenly light
High in the heavens for a better band,
Since the proud scathers had relinquished them.
The holy God, therefore, in His great might,
Willed that there should be set beneath heaven's span,
Earth, firmament, wide waves, created world,
Replacing foes cast headlong from their home."

And here is the poet's grim description of the place of torment. It may be noticed how he mingles with the Hebrew notion of the penal fire, the Scandinavian fancy, bred amidst the rigours of a northern climate, of a penal frost :

"The fiend, with all his comrades, fell
From Heaven ; angels, for three nights and days
From Heaven to Hell, where the Lord changed them all
To devils, because they His Deed and Word
Refused to worship. Therefore in worse light,
Under the earth beneath, Almighty God
Had placed them triumphless in the swart Hell.
There evening, immeasurably long,



SAXON CHURCH AND REMAINS OF MONASTERY, JARROW.

(*From Surtees.*)

Brings to each fond renewal of the fire ;
Then comes, at dawn, the east wind keen with frost,
Its dart, or fire contiuual, torment sharp,
The punishment wrought for them, they must bear."

Bede (Baeda) was born at Jarrow, in Northumbria,[1] in the year 673, on the land which was afterwards given by King Egferth[2] to the monastery of that place. When seven years old he was handed over to Benedict (surnamed Biscop), who was then occupied in founding the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow. He was first placed in one at Wearmouth, the Jarrow house not being then built. He was an inmate of one or other of them for the rest of his life, and indeed seems very seldom to have quitted their walls. That life was, as we shall see, busy, but it had few incidents. In his nineteenth year he was ordained deacon (the usual age was twenty-five), and, in his thirtieth, priest. Study and devotion occupied all his days, and the list of what he did shows that his learning and his industry were marvellous. For his studies indeed he had remarkable advantages, which could hardly have been found elsewhere in England at that time. Benedict, the first abbot of the two monasteries, had brought with him a library of books from Rome and Vienne, and had established relations with various seats of learning at home and abroad. "Nowhere else could he acquire at once the Irish, the Roman, the Gallican, and the Canterbury learning."[3] Of these he made such ample use, that he may be justly called the father of English learning.

[1] Jarrow is the parish, of which South Shields, in Durham, is a part. [2] See p. 138.

[3] "Dictionary of Christian Biography" (Bede).

In 734 he made one of the very few journeys, possibly the only journey of his life, to pay a visit to Egbert, Archbishop of York. The object of this unusual exertion—and it is probable that his health was even then failing—was to promote the advancement of knowledge. Egbert was then meditating the work by which he has earned the gratitude of all English-speaking peoples—the foundation of the great School or University of York, the chief home of learning in these islands, while Oxford and Cambridge were nothing more than petty market-towns, if indeed so much.

In the Easter of the year following this visit, Bede's days were manifestly drawing to a close. But he laboured on to the last. The pathetic story of his last hours, told as it has been often before, must not be omitted here. He was busy at the time with a translation of the Gospel of John into the English tongue (this translating of the Scriptures and of the chief forms of devotion into the speech of the people was a thing very near to his heart). It is one of his disciples, Cuthbert by name, who tells the story. He goes on: "When the Tuesday before the Ascension of our Lord came, he began to suffer still more in his health, and a small swelling appeared in his feet; but he passed all that day and dictated cheerfully, and now and then, among other things, said: 'Go on quickly; I know not how long I shall hold out, and whether my Maker will not soon take me away.' But to us he seemed very well to know the time of his departure; and so he spent the night, awake, in thanksgiving; and when the morning ap-

peared—that is, Wednesday—he ordered us to write with all speed what he had begun, and this done, we walked till the third hour with the relics of saints, according to the custom of that day. There was one of us with him, who said to him: 'Most dear master, there is still one chapter wanting; do you think it troublesome to be asked any more questions?' He answered: 'It is no trouble. Take your pen, and make ready, and write fast.' Which he did, but at the ninth hour, he said to me, 'I have some little articles of value in my chest, such as pepper, napkins, and incense: run quickly, and bring the priests of our monastery to me, that I may distribute among them the gifts which God has bestowed on me. The rich in this world are bent on giving gold and silver and other precious things; but I, in charity, will joyfully give my brothers what God has given unto me.' He spoke to every one of them, admonishing and entreating them that they would carefully say masses and prayers for him, which they readily promised; but they all mourned and wept, especially because he said, 'They should no more see his face in this world.' They rejoiced for that he said, 'It is time that I return to Him who formed me out of nothing. I have lived long, my merciful Judge well foresaw my life for me; the time of my dissolution draws nigh; for I desire to die, and to be with Christ.' Having said much more, he passed the day joyfully till the evening; and the boy, above mentioned, said: 'Dear master, there is yet one sentence not written.' He answered: 'Write quickly.' Soon after, the boy said, 'It is finished.' He replied: 'It

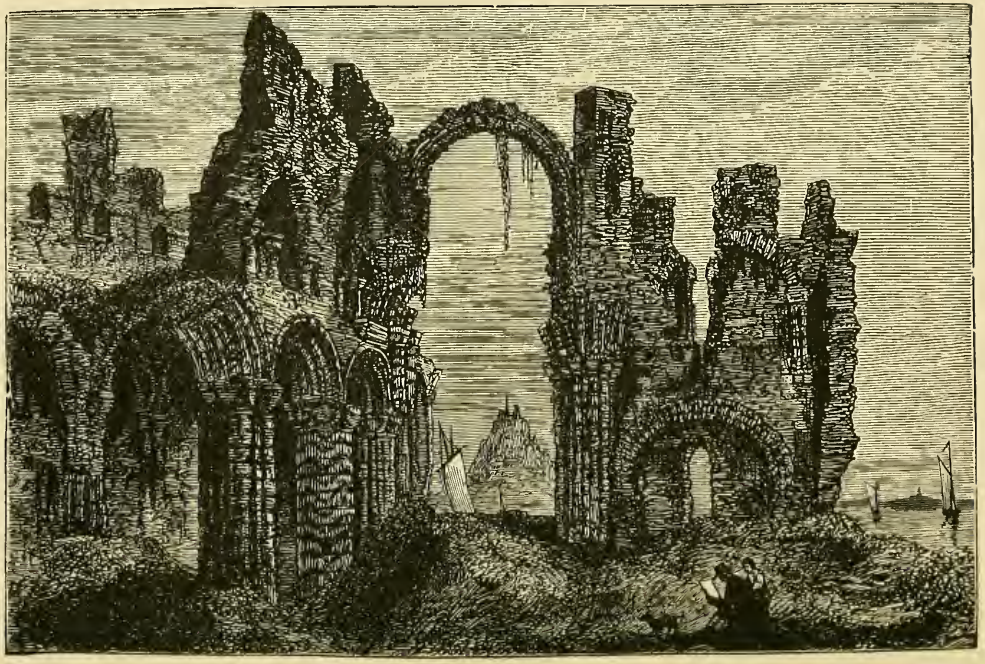
is well; you have said the truth. It is finished. Receive my head into your hands, for it is a great satisfaction to me to sit facing my holy place, where I was wont to pray, that I may also, sitting, call upon my Father! And thus, on the pavement of his little cell, singing: 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;' when he had named the Holy Ghost, he breathed his last, and so departed to the heavenly kingdom. All that beheld the blessed father's death, said that they had never seen any other expire in so much devotion and tranquillity."

Bede's great work was his "Ecclesiastical History," "the most valuable historical work produced in this country previous to the seventeenth century," to quote Dr. Giles's estimate of it. It is addressed to Ceolwulf, King of Northumbria, and carries down the history of this country as far as the year 731. Of the thorough honesty of purpose with which it is written there can be no question; nor of the zeal with which the author sought for information from all available sources. He had his prepossessions. He attributes, it may well be thought, too great a share in the conversion of England to Augustine and the missionaries of Rome; he gives, accordingly, too little credit to the labours of the British preachers. But he always did his best to tell the truth as he knew it; and no one can hesitate to allow what he asks of the reader: "That if he shall, in this that we have written, find anything not delivered according to the truth, he will not impute the same to me, who, as the true rule of history requires, have laboured sincerely to commit to writing such things as I could

gather from common report for the instruction of posterity." To him, indeed, we owe, in fact, almost all the light we have on the doings of the English people for nearly the first three centuries after their coming to this island.

The other works of Bede, excepting his biographies of St. Cuthbert and of the abbots of Jarrow and Wearmouth, have in themselves little interest for readers to-day, but they show how great was his learning. Among them are Commentaries on many of the books of Scripture, elementary treatises on such subjects as orthography and the rules of verse, scientific treatises on the Seasons, the Equinox, Leap Year, &c., hymns and epigrams. It would be scarcely too much to say that he had, in as great a degree as it has been given to any man to acquire it, all the knowledge of his time. He wrote, for the most part, in Latin, and of that language his knowledge was large, and, for an uncritical time, exact. Its best authors, especially the poets, were well known to him. He knew something too of Greek and of Hebrew. But with all his knowledge of other languages he had a strong love of his own. His translations of the Scripture into English are unfortunately lost; but how dear this work was to his heart may be judged from the fact that his last days were given to it.

Cuthbert was a contemporary of Caedmon, though probably a little later, having been born about the year 625. He was a native of Northumbria. This, it must be remembered, in those days, reached as far as the Forth, and Cuthbert was born on what is now



RUINS OF LINDISFARNE.

the Scottish side of the Border. In early manhood he seemed to see, as he was shepherding his flock by night, a vision of angels carrying a soul to glory. The next day he heard that Bishop Aidan had passed away at the very moment when he had seen the vision. Immediately he went to the monastery of Melrose,[1] a dependent house of the Abbey of Lindisfarne. He was admitted into the brotherhood, and soon became known for his devotion and energy. About 660 he went with his Abbot Eata and other monks to occupy a new foundation which a prince of the royal house of Deira had just founded at Ripon. Their stay was brief; the founder had adopted the Roman views about the time of observing Easter; Cuthbert and his companions held to the views which they had learnt from Columba.[2] They would not give way, and the founders sent them back to Melrose.[3] The year of their return (it probably took place early in 661) was a year of pestilence. Among its victims at Melrose was Boisil, the Prior. Cuthbert was elected into his place. For three years he was diligent in

[1] This was not the house the romantic ruins of which Scott has made so famous, but an earlier foundation in a spot known as Old Melrose.

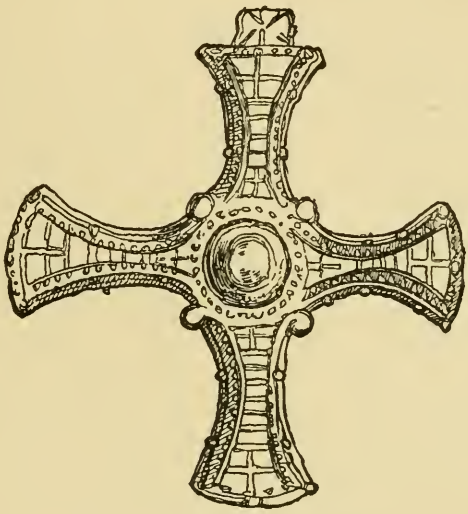
[2] The question about Easter is far too complicated to be discussed here. Various ways of reckoning the time for observing this festival have been used in the Church. There was a cycle of eight, another of eighty-four, and a third of nineteen years. The second of these was that to which Columba and his disciples adhered. The third was backed by the authority of Rome, and is that now employed.

[3] Afterwards Cuthbert changed his views and came over to the Roman use. We find him denouncing in the strongest terms those who still held to his old views, ranking them, in fact, with the worst offenders, as quite unworthy of the fellowship of Christian men.

missionary work, going forth from his cell in the monastery, often for weeks at a time, to preach to the ignorant people round him. These journeys led him as far as Pictland on the West Coast. In 664 he was removed from Melrose to be Prior of the parent house at Lindisfarne. This post he filled for twelve years, employing himself in the same works of charity and piety which had occupied his time at Melrose. In 678 he seems to have felt that his duty to man had been fulfilled, that thenceforward he might devote himself to the care of his own soul. He retired to a solitary cell which he fixed, first on a lonely spot on the mainland, then on the uninhabited island of Farne, a few miles to the south of Lindisfarne. His own abode was a cell of the narrowest dimensions into which no one was permitted to enter; it was furnished with an oratory, and surrounded by a wall which shut out all prospect of sea or land. But for his visitors—and the fame of his sanctity brought many visitors to the spot—he raised a humble building. But it was seldom that they were permitted to see him. Now and then, when there seemed to be some urgent reason for granting the boon, he would show his face and give his blessing.

In this solitude he dwelt for eight years. In 684 he was persuaded to leave it to fill the office of bishop to which he had been chosen at the Synod of Twyford. To persuade him, indeed, was no easy task. King Egferth had to come in person and urge him to accept the office. His old superior, too, Eata, Bishop of Lindisfarne, resigned his see to him, taking in exchange the bishopric of Hexham. For something

less than two years he stayed at Lindisfarne ; then he resigned his see, and went forth to his cell at Farne. In February, 686, about two months after his return, he was seized with his last sickness. The abbot of Lindisfarne went to see him and received his directions about his burial. Then he left him promising soon to return. But stormy weather prevented him from fulfilling his promise for five days. When he came, weakness had mastered the old man's



ST. CUTHBERT'S CROSS.

love of solitude. Cuthbert was waiting for him in the building which he had erected for his guests. He had been there all the time, longing for his return. He consented, too, to the abbot's leaving some of the brethren behind to minister to his wants. A second time the abbot returned to Farne, for he saw that the end was near, and he was anxious to change the dying man's purpose about his remains.

Hitherto he had commanded that they should be buried near his cell ; now he consented to their being taken to Lindisfarne. The reason he gave for his former wish is curiously characteristic of the time. He had not grudged the monastery anything that he could give it, but he had thought of what would be to its good. His fame, he was sure, would lead to a sanctuary being established wherever his bones might be laid. Criminals would flee to them for safety, and the brethren would have trouble with the civil power. The dying man was then taken into his oratory, where one of the monks watched by him. Then the abbot was called in to hear his last words. About midnight on the 20th of March he died. He had lingered nearly three weeks after the first attack of his disease. The abbot waved a torch in either hand as a signal to the watchmen at Lindisfarne, and he hurried into the church where the monks were assembled to tell the news. The next day the body was brought to the monastery and buried by the altar. It now rests at Durham. The story of its wanderings—for Cuthbert in his last hours had enjoined on the abbot that the brotherhood must never leave it—belongs to a later time, to a time when the Danes were a constant terror to the land.

XVI.

THE ENGLISH PEOPLE.

It is time to say something of the political and social condition of the people which has now settled itself permanently in Britain, though it must be premised that some of the details belong to a later time.

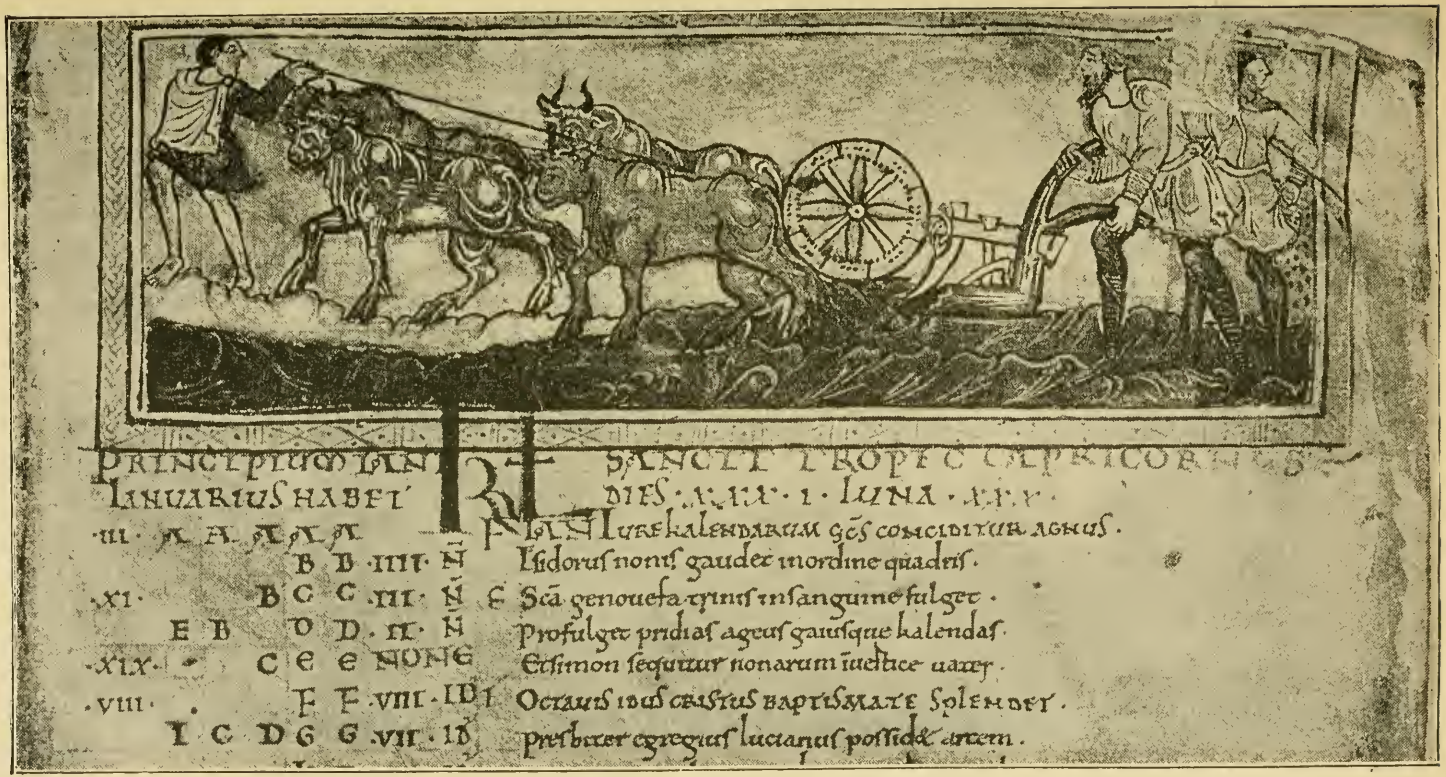
It may be considered certain that the English tribes, while dwelling in their first home, knew nothing of kings. There was a noble and a non-noble class among them, individuals of the former rising doubtless from time to time, by the force of great abilities and on occasion of great national emergency, to a commanding position. But there was no permanent monarchy. But this was changed by the migration to their new dwelling-place. Perhaps it may be said that the emergencies that called for the institution of kingship became permanent. Anyhow, we find the chieftains who led their successive bodies of invaders becoming kings of this or that region conquered by them, and the monarchy is hereditary, though not by any strict principle of succession such as now prevails. A minor could be

passed over in favour of an older kinsman, whose age more fitted him for the post ; a weak prince might be set aside. But, as time went on, convenience dictated a more strict observance of the hereditary principle, election being found in practice to give rise to troubles and disputes. But we never find an assertion of what may be described as the *jus divinum* of the pedigree. On the other hand, it should be noticed that all the English kings, whether tribal or national, belonged to a limited caste. They all claimed to be descended from Woden.

The kingdom was what we call a constitutional monarchy, exactly the "hereditary kingship with well-defined prerogatives" of Thucydides. The king was the chief magistrate in peace, the chief leader in war. His actual power differed much with the individual who exercised it, but it was military rather than civil, nearly absolute in the field, sharply limited in civil matters to the administration of justice. But the theory of his power continued to develop. In the earliest times he was so far on a level with his subjects, that his life could be assessed like theirs, only at a higher price. The "wer-gild," or blood-money of a king, was put at 7,200 shillings, that of a ceorl at two hundred. The special sanctity of later days had not been invented. But various causes, native and foreign, were at work developing it. Before the Conquest, it had a rudimentary existence.

The eorl or earl[1] was the chief man of the village,

[1] This word must be carefully distinguished from the "earl" of later times, a title taking its origin, we may suppose, from the Danish "jarl," and superseding the older designation of "alderman," or, more properly, "earldorman."



ANGLO-SAXON CALENDAR—PLOUGHING.

(*From the original MS.*)

chief, not as the *maire* of a French village, but in virtue of an hereditary nobility. And he was superior in wealth as in birth. The earls, in fact, were a territorial aristocracy, who administered justice in times of peace (though we find, as time goes on, professional judges beginning to be employed), and led the host in times of war.

The churls (ceorls) formed the mass of the community. They were free; they owned land; they had the right to bear arms. They bore the same relation to the earls as did the plebeians to the patricians of Rome. Probably they may be traced to the same origin; they were late incomers into the community of the original settlers.

Under the churl came the "laet." He was not a freeholder; he tilled the land of another. I cannot do better than describe his position in the words of Mr. Green. "In the modern sense of freedom the laet was free enough. He had house and home of his own; his life and limb were as secure as the ceorl's—save as against his lord; it is probable from what we see in later laws, that as time went on he was recognized as part of the nation, summoned to the folk-moot, allowed equal right at law, and called like the full freeman to the hosting. But he was unfree as regards lord and land He had neither part nor lot in the common land of the village. The ground which he tilled he held of some free man of the tribe, to whom he paid rent in labour or in kind. And this man was his lord. Whatever right the unfree villager might gain in the general social life of his fellow-countrymen, he had no rights as against

his lord. He could leave neither land nor lord at his will. He was bound to render due service to his lord in tillage or in fight. So long, however, as these services were done, the land was his own. His lord could not take it from him ; and he was bound to give him aid and protection in exchange for his services."

Finally came the slave. Sometimes he would be of the same race as his master, one who had been driven in hard times to sell himself and his family for bread, or who had been condemned to a servile condition for crime. Sometimes he would be a captive in war. Most English prisoners would probably be sold abroad, as in the case of those whom Gregory saw in the slave-market at Rome ; but some, doubtless, would be kept in their captor's households. Then there would be some descendants of the British tribes whom the English invaders had dispossessed. The slave had no rights ; he was a living chattel.

Another class remains to be mentioned, that of the thanes (thegns). These were the immediate followers of the king ; they may be described as a non-hereditary nobility, raised to the rank they bore for service done to the king. They constituted his body-guard, and, commonly, his personal counsellors. The steward, the cup-bearer, the armour-bearer, would be among the thanes of early times. Later on, we find these simple functions developed into what may be called high office of State.

The alderman (earldorman) was the chief magistrate of a shire or group of shires. His office became

more defined and more important as time went on. Originally he was the chieftain of a hundred; and doubtless there were aldermen before there were kings. He became in after-times the vice-gerent and representative of the king for a certain portion of his dominions. This growth of importance goes, of course, with the growth of unity in the monarchy. The greater the king, the greater the alderman. Finally, we see him giving place to an official of similar function in the earl of the later kingdom.

The free citizens met in assemblies, town-moots, hundred-moots, and the folk-moot. The supreme assembly, or Witenagemot, was originally an assembly of the whole nation. This soon became an impossibility. It became consequently more and more representative; but the old principle still retained something of its force. When king and nobles and prelates, the wise men specially called to take part in the deliberations of the assembly, had come to a decision, that decision was ratified by cries and clatter of arms from the body of freemen, assembled, not so much as spectators as an integral part of the meeting.[1]

To turn to social matters, it may be said that their houses was small, mean, and ill-built. Thus we find a king compelled to protect his candles from guttering by enclosing them in lanterns. The whole story is, as has been observed, an indication of the

[1] Perhaps we may compare them with the presbyters who lay hands on candidates for ordination along with the bishops. These represent the assenting voice of the whole body of the ministry.

rudeness of their domestic appliances. Some of their furniture seems to have been of an ornamental and even splendid kind. Richly coloured curtains were hung upon the walls. Carpets, however, were almost unknown, the floors being covered with straw or rushes. Fresh layers were put over the old, the latter being removed but seldom, an arrangement which must have been anything but cleanly, and must have had something to do with the frequent plagues which we hear of in those times, and with the generally shortness of almost all the lives the beginning and end of which we happen to know.

The seats used were commonly benches or stools. Chairs with backs were rare luxuries. Tables were sometimes of a costly kind. We read of tables of silver and gold, and of one particular article made of silver, that was worth three hundred pounds. But the ordinary articles were probably rough and ill-made. We hear of candlesticks and lanterns, but not of lamps. Handbells also were in use.

Bed-linen was in use, at least among the wealthier class. Mattresses and pillows were often, if not always, made of straw. For warmth, mats and bear skins, with, presumably, skins of other animals were employed.

The ordinary drinking cup was probably made of horn or wood. But cups of gold and silver, with dishes and basons of these metals, were in use among the rich, and at the high tables of the wealthier monasteries. We find a council of the English Church ordering that no vessel of horn should be used in worship. Glass was scarcely known. In

ANGLO-SAXON DRINKING-HORN.
(*From the original in the British Museum.*)

Bede's time the English are described as "ignorant and helpless of the art of making it."

The food of the people consisted largely of flesh, and of flesh probably the greater part came from swine. Swine are frequently mentioned in great numbers, as forming part of a man's wealth. Thus a nobleman is mentioned as bequeathing two thousand swine to his daughter. This animal would be particularly useful on account of the fitness of its flesh for salting. It must be remembered that for a considerable part of the year fresh meat was unknown. In this we may trace one of the chief causes of disease among the early English.

Fish was largely in use. Most of the freshwater kinds with which we are now familiar occur; but eels have the same predominance among them as swine among land animals. Four thousand eels are mentioned as having been given by the monks of Ramsay to the monks of Peterborough. It is probably that freshwater fish was used then, as indeed it continued to be used for long afterwards, in much greater quantity than at present. Sea fish was comparatively rare, the appliances for catching them being ineffective. Thus we hear that Wilfred taught the rude people of Sussex to catch fish out of the sea, a thing which they had never thought of doing. We hear, however, of salmon, herrings, and of the common varieties of shell-fish. Porpoises too, a very rare sight in these days, are mentioned.

Wheat and barley were grown; but the use of the former was much less common than it is now. We are told of the monks of a certain monastery that

they ate barley bread because their income did not permit them as many meals as they needed of the wheaten article.

Among the other articles of diet we find milk, butter, cheese, and honey. To these, as poultry was kept, we may add eggs.

The diet of the richer class was probably largely supplemented by game of various kinds, the flesh of the deer being the most important. Flying game could not be obtained so easily when it had to be shot with the arrow or brought down with the sling. The most nutritious of English game birds, the pheasant, was not introduced; on the other hand, the huge bustard, now extinct in the British islands, was probably common.

Many kinds of fruit were in use. Strawberries and raspberries are indigenous to England, but probably were not then improved by cultivation. Apples and pears were grown in orchards, as also were figs, at least in parts of England where the climate favoured them.[1] The hazel-nut is of native growth. The walnut (as its name "foreign nut" indicates) came from abroad, and indeed was probably introduced by the Romans, to whom we also owe the cherry.

Wine was also largely produced, but, as we can easily believe, not of a first-rate quality. The Norman followers of William the Conqueror provided themselves, we are told, with a large quantity of wine, not venturing to encounter the native English growth.

The common drinks of the people were ale and mead, the latter being made of honey. We hear also

[1] The fig grows luxuriantly in Sussex.

of cider, made from the juice of apples ; and once or twice of morat, made from mulberries.

They sat at table, the women eating with the men. Spoons and knives were used. Forks are the invention of a much later age (not earlier than the sixteenth century).

The chief sport was hunting, of which the English were fond, but not with the passionate devotion that we find among their Norman conquerors. Deer were frequently caught in nets, and sometimes brought down with arrows, or hunted down by dogs. Boars were killed with spears. Hawks were used for the capture of larger birds, especially herons.

Of indoor games we hear of none but a kind of draughts. The wealthy had harpers, gleemen, jesters, and tumblers, who amused them at their meals and during the long drinking bouts which commonly followed them.

XVII.

WESSEX AND EGBERT.

WESSEX has often been mentioned in the chapters which have been devoted to describing the rise and fall of Northumbria and Mercia. To these notices there is little that we need or indeed that we are able to add. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is indeed principally a record of West Saxon doings, but it is meagre in the extreme except where it has been supplemented from Bede, and Bede, as a Northumbrian, makes little mention of Wessex. For the first fifty years after the deposition of Ceawlin in 592 the West Saxons were chiefly occupied in warfare with their British neighbours on the west. In 607 we hear of a battle with the South Saxons, which was apparently decisive of West Saxon superiority. Some thirty years after came the conversion of the royal house to Christianity, followed, probably, at no long interval by that of the people. In 672 we have the novel incident, novel indeed then, but not at all out of agreement with German ways of thinking,[1] of a

[1] Tacitus speaks of the high honour in which the Germans held their women and of the royal power which they sometimes bestowed upon them.

reigning queen. King Cenwalh died, and Sexburh, his queen, reigned for one year after him. This was in 672–3. Fifteen years later began the reign of the most distinguished of the kings who ruled in Wessex during its period of depression, Ina. He reigned for thirty-eight years, and then resigned his crown, weary of the vanity of human things. His supremacy, at one period of his reign, was not less than that which had been exercised by his predecessor Ceawlin. Kent, Sussex, and East Anglia owned his overlordship. On the west he pushed the Britons back beyond the Parret, and built a border fortress at Taunton. But civil strife, which was again and again the source of weakness among the West Saxons, disturbed his latter days.

The story of his abdication is curious, and characteristic of the times. He and his queen had spent the night at one of the royal palaces, and had been splendidly entertained by its keeper. The next morning they departed, but after a while Ina was persuaded by his queen to turn back. When they reached the palace they found that it had been made filthy with the dung of cattle, while in the royal bed a sow, with its newly-farrowed litter of pigs, had been placed. The warden had done this at the Queen's order. Ina turned to her for an explanation of so strange a sight, and she preached him a sermon on the vanity of human greatness, the quick changes which bring high things low. The King was so impressed by the discourse and its forcible illustration, that he at once carried out a purpose which he had long entertained: he laid down his crown, went on a pilgrimage to Rome,

and there spent the remainder of his life in practices of devotion. The greatest memorial of himself which Ina left behind him was his code of laws, founded on the institutions of his people, and itself made the groundwork of more complete systems by the rulers that came after him. But it must not be forgotten that he was one of the most liberal benefactors of his race to the churches and monastic foundations of Wessex.

All that is essential for our purpose in the history of the next sixty years has already been told, and we may pass on at once to the events which led to the restoration of the supremacy to Wessex, and ultimately to the union of the country under one crown.

Egbert, son of Edmund, sub-king of Kent, and fourth in descent from Ingild, brother of the great Ina, claimed, or had claimed on his behalf, the throne of Wessex on the death of Cynewulf (784). He was then a boy, according to one account, not more than nine years of age. The people preferred his kinsman Brihtric ; and Egbert, to save his life, fled to Offa, King of Mercia. Offa, though he would not give him up to his enemies, was unable or unwilling to shelter him, and the young prince made his way to the Court of Charles the Great (Charlemagne). Charles was then in the midst of his career of conquest, and Egbert, though we know no particulars of his life during these years, probably served in his armies. But Charles was not only a conqueror ; he was a ruler also, as great in peace as he was in war. The countries which he subdued he made into a great empire, divided into

CHARLEMAGNE.
(From the painting by Dürer.)

kingdoms, duchies, and counties, each with its proper governor, and all governed by equal laws.[1]

On Christmas Day, 800, Charles was crowned by Pope Leo III. at Rome, and proclaimed Cæsar Augustus, the successor of the old Emperors of Rome. Egbert was present at the ceremony. That year, or very soon afterwards, he heard of his own accession to the throne of his native country. King Brihtric was dead, poisoned by his wife. She had mixed the draught for a young man of whom she was jealous, and her husband drank it by mistake. Egbert, who was now the only descendant of the old Wessex kings, was chosen in his absence. He seems to have set himself to carry out the plans which he had learnt to form in the company of the Emperor Charles. He had a long and hard struggle before him. For twenty years and more he was engaged in a conflict with Mercia. In 823 came his success, and, if the Saxon Chronicle is to be believed, came all at once. "In this year Egbert, King of the West Saxons, and Beornwulf, King of the Mercians, fought at Ellandune [probably Wilton, near Salisbury]. Egbert gained the victory. The slaughter was very great. Then the King sent his son Ethelfulf, with Ealstan the Bishop and Wulfhard the Count, into Kent with a great army. These put to flight Baldred, King of Kent, in the northern part of that region near the river Kent. After this the people of Kent and of

[1] See "Germany," Story of the Nations (pp. 58–91). There could not then have been a better place than this for Egbert to prepare himself for his future work. In Charles's camps he learnt the art of war, and in him saw how a great kingdom might be ruled wisely and justly.

Surrey, and the South Saxons, and the East Saxons, came over to him. And these in former times had been unjustly wrested from his ancestors. In this same year also the King of the East Angles and his people begged King Egbert to make peace with them and to be their protector. This they did for fear of the Mercians. In this year also the East Angles slew Beornwulf, King of the Mercians." We may guess that many things had been preparing the way for this result, and that the success was not quite as sudden as is here described. Anyhow, Egbert was now overlord of Southern and Western England. Four years later his dominion was largely extended. I quote again from the Saxon Chronicle: "In this same year (827) King Egbert subdued the kingdom of the Mercians, and all the region that is to the south of the Humber. . . . He also led an army to Dore [probably in Yorkshire] against the men of Northumbria. But they, meeting him there, offered him submission and peace; after that they parted from each other." The Chronicler tells us that Egbert was "the eighth king that was Bretwalda." The title itself had become extinct for some time, the last holder having been Oswin of Northumbria, who died in 670. It was now revived and given to Egbert. There is no doubt that his power was superior to that exercised by any of his predecessors, and, indeed, was such as to entitle him to be called "King of England." We must not suppose, however, that all England was subject to him in the same way that his own dominions of Wessex were subject. Probably the relations between him and the other English princes were various. Kent, with which

he was connected by birth, and which was ruled by his son, may be said to have been as much subject to him as was Wessex itself. Northern England retained, it would seem, more independence. Mercia was not absolutely conquered till long afterwards, while Northumbria, by its voluntary acknowledgment of Egbert's supremacy, preserved its freedom practically entire.

It was not only over the English that Egbert gained his successes. The British kingdoms also felt his power. In the year 828 he led an army against the "North Britons," *i.e.*, the inhabitants of North Wales, and made them all humbly obedient to him. The Celtic kings of Cumberland and Strathclyde probably followed the same course, as did the Northumbrians, and escaped attack by a submission which left them still free.

Egbert died in 836, but not till he had seen the first beginnings of another great movement of races, which was to trouble for many years, and in the end to overthrow, the kingdom which he had built up. After some four centuries of conflict, first against the Britons, then among themselves, the English had been wrought into one power. And now another stock of their own race, under the names of Danes, Northmen, Normans, was beginning to bring that power to the ground. So important a subject demands a new chapter.

XVIII.

THE SUCCESSORS OF EGBERT, AND THE DANES.

WE have seen that for more than a hundred years before the end of the Roman dominion, the eastern and southern shores of Britain were ravaged by fleets of pirates from Northern and Eastern Europe. We have also seen that when the Roman armies were withdrawn, these ravages became more serious and more constant; that, in fact, the plunderers became conquerors, and possessed themselves of the whole island, the mountainous and remote districts of the west excepted. When this conquest was complete, the visits from these dwellers in the North and East ceased altogether. For two hundred and fifty years after Uffa landed on the coast of Norfolk, and founded the kingdom of East Anglia, the rovers either stopped at home, or busied themselves with other expeditions. For some time a feeling of kinship would prevent them from invading the new dwelling-places of their own relatives. Afterwards the southward movement of other tribes left them room to expand. Indeed, the natives of the old English, Jutish, and Saxon regions from which the conquerors came forth, do not seem to have ever sent out again any great number of

adventurers. The rovers of the sea, of whom we shall hear so much for the next hundred and fifty years, came from more northern parts, from the peninsula and islands of Denmark, from the coasts of Sweden and Norway. The Irish Chronicles speak of them as of two races, the Fingalls (*fair strangers*), whom we may identify with the Swedes and Norwegians, and the Dubhgalls (*dark strangers*), in whom we recognize the Danes. The latter seem to have been, as they have often shown themselves in later times, the stronger and the ruling race, and this is the name by which they will be known in the story which we have now to tell.

In 753 we hear of a landing in the Isle of Thanet; but there is nothing to show who were the invaders. The first express mention of the Danes by the Saxon Chronicler is under the year 787. "In these days there came for the first time three ships of the Northmen to the land of the Herethi [probably Dorsetshire]. The King's lieutenant rode thither, and would have made them come to the King's house, for he knew not who they were. But there was he slain. These were the first ships of the Danes that came into England." Ten years later we hear of them on the east coast. "Certain Pagans made ravages among the Northumbrians, and plundered the monastery which is at the mouth of the Wear. One of their chiefs was slain, and sundry of their ships wrecked. Many of the men were drowned, and such as reached the harbour alive were straightway slain." Little mercy then, as afterwards, was shown on either side.

For some years after this date the Saxon Chronicle

makes no mention of the Northmen. We learn from other sources indeed that they plundered Hii (Iona) in 808, and they were certainly seen elsewhere along the coasts of Europe, even as far south as the Mediterranean. It may have been to this time that the story told of the Emperor Charles [1] refers. He was visiting one of the seaport towns of Southern France when some fast-sailing, square-rigged ships were spied. No one knew to what nation they belonged. Some thought that they came from Africa, others that they belonged to British traders. A message came that the crews had landed, and were plundering the shore. Immediately all seized their arms and hastened to the harbour. The Northmen, hearing that the Emperor was in the place, and not feeling themselves strong enough to fight with him, hastened back to their ships and set sail. As Charles from his window watched them depart, he burst into tears. "I do not weep," he said, "because I fear that these wretches can do me any harm. I grieve because they have dared, even while I am yet alive, to show themselves upon these coasts, and because I dread the evil which they will do to my descendants." Towards the close of his reign Egbert came into collision with these terrible enemies. Under the date 832 the Chronicle has: "In this year the Pagans wasted Sceapige [Sheppey—'Sheep Island']. The next year they came in greater force. "In this year King Egbert fought with thirty-five pirate ships at Carrum [Charmouth, in Dorsetshire]. The slaughter was great, but the pirates held the field of battle."

[1] Charles died in 812.

This means, of course, that the King was defeated. He is said to have been so much alarmed by this disaster that he summoned a council of sub-kings and nobles[1] to meet him in London and devise measures of defence against the new enemy. Such measures were needed, for in 835 the Danes returned in greater force than before. "In this year a great array of ships came to the Britons of the West Country, and made alliance with them against Egbert, King of Wessex. When the King heard of the matter, he marched with his army against them, and fought with them at Hengesterdun [Hengston Hill, in Cornwall]. Then he put to flight both the Britons and the Danes. The King is said to have severely punished the Britons for their share in this treaty, banishing all of their race from his dominions." In the following year he died, and was succeeded by his son Ethelwulf, then sub-king of Kent. This office Ethelwulf handed on to his own son, Athelstan.

For some years the history of England is little but a history of continual struggle between its people and the Danish invaders. In 837 two great battles were fought, one at Southampton, where the rovers, who had come with a fleet of thirty-three ships, were defeated; another at Portland, where the alderman Ethelhelm, with a following of the men of Dorsetshire, after being successful during the greater part of the day, was finally beaten and slain. The following

[1] Lappenberg (ii. 8) mentions a Mercian charter, published at this time, which bears the signature of the bishops, but not of the kings whom they represented. These are supposed to have been engaged at the Council in London.

years brought still worse disasters. "The Alderman Herebright, and many of the men of the Marshes, were slain by the Pagans." It is not clear who are meant by the "men of the Marshes." Possibly they may have been the inhabitants of the low-lying shore between Hythe and Hastings. The east coast, as far north as Lincolnshire, was attacked in the same years. "Many men in Lindsey [North Lincolnshire], and East Anglia and Kent were slain by their army." The following year there was "a great slaughter in London, Canterbury, and Rochester;" and in the year after again, "King Ethelwulf fought at Carrum [Charmouth] with thirty-five ships of the pirates; and the Danes held the field of battle."

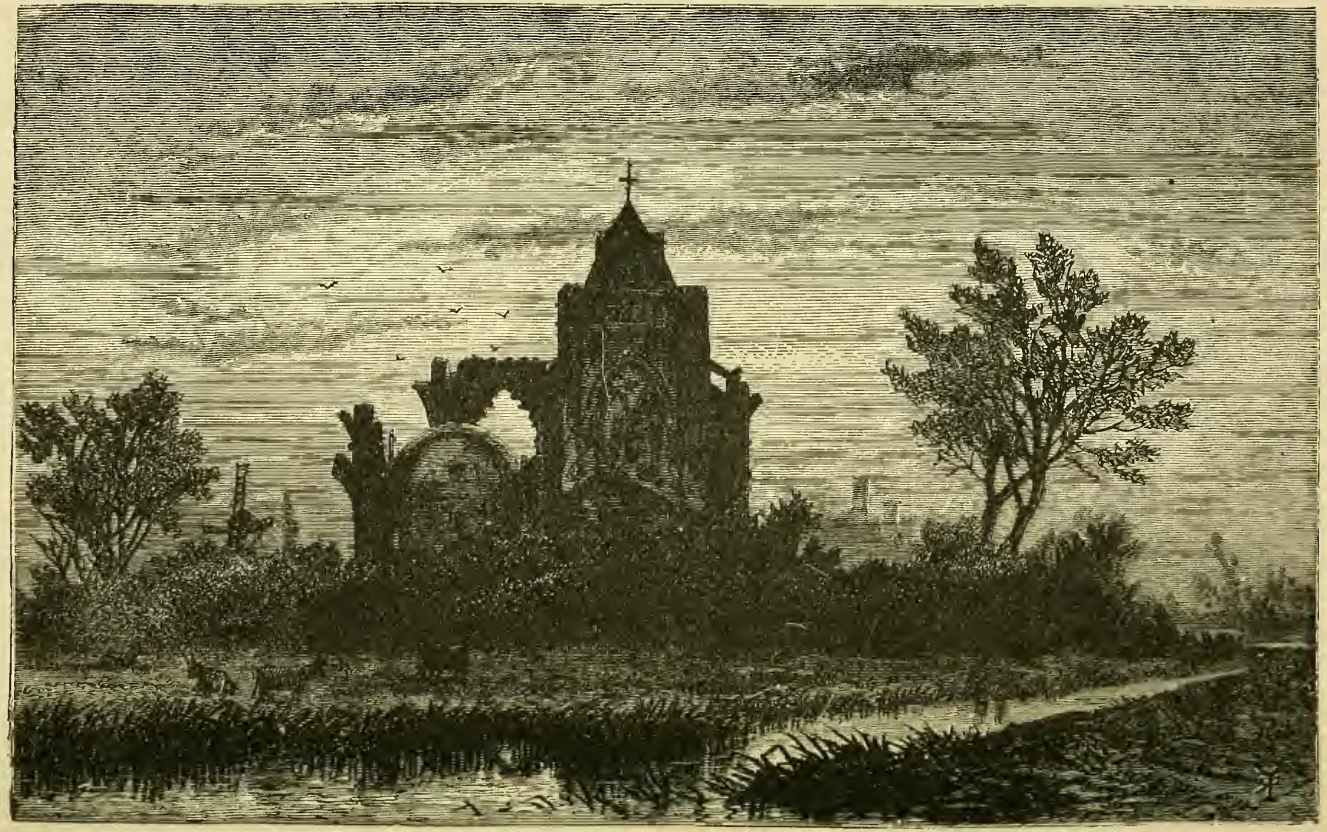
A few years afterwards we find a bishop taking the field against the invaders. This was in Somersetshire, near the mouth of the Parret, when the Danes had landed, the men of Dorsetshire and Somersetshire combining to resist them. In 851 came a more formidable attack than ever, and afterwards a time of rest. The Chronicler thus relates the events. "In this year the Alderman Ceorl, with the men of Devonshire, fought with an army of the pagans at Wensbury (?), and made a great slaughter of them, and won the victory. In the same year King Athelstan [of Kent] and the Alderman Ealcher fought a battle at sea, and routed a great fleet at Sandwich in Kent, taking nine ships, and putting the rest to flight. The Pagans also now for the first time abode in winter quarters at Thanet. And the same year there came three hundred and fifty ships to the mouth of the Thames, and went up, and took by storm Canter-

bury and London, and put to flight Beortwulf, King of the Mercians, and his army. Then they went southwards across the Thames into Surrey; and then King Ethelwulf and his son Ethelbald fought against them with an army of the West Saxons. And the King and his men made a greater slaughter of them than had ever before been made of the Pagans, and gained the victory." The wintering of the Danes in Thanet is a very significant fact. It is not expressly said when it took place; probably it was in the winter before the battles here mentioned, and the huge army which Ethelwulf defeated came with the hope of making a permanent settlement in the country.

It would be tedious to relate all the Danish incursions of which the Chronicle makes mention. In 854 we find the "Pagans" wintering in Sheppey. For years afterwards they land in Kent, where the people vainly endeavour to purchase peace. The Danes take the money, but the same night secretly leave the camp and plunder all the eastern part of the country. The year following they make a descent on East Anglia, where, says the Chronicle, "they became horsemen, and the people made a peace with them." It was in East Anglia that they gained their strongest hold of the country. To this day that part of England, in its names, and in the character of its population, shows many traces of their presence. In 868 we find them in Mercia, at Nottingham, that is, in the very heart of England. King Ethelred besieged them there. There is nothing memorable about the war, for the Mercians seem to have soon

come to terms with the invaders, except that a notable person, Alfred, the King's youngest brother, of whom I shall have much to say hereafter, was present at the siege. The next year the Pagans took possession of York; and in the next again (870) they took up their winter quarters at Thetford in Norfolk. Two picturesque stories now relieve the dreary record of these incessant conflicts.

The men of Lindsey encountered and defeated, with the loss of three of their kings, a Danish army which had issued from York. It was only the darkness that saved them from total destruction. But after nightfall the Danes were joined by a numerous body of their countrymen. The English, who were under the command of the Alderman Alfgar, were so terrified by the news that out of eight thousand two thousand only had the courage to remain with their leader. These Alfgar arrayed the next day in order of battle, commanding himself the centre, and placing the Alderman of Lincoln on the left and Morcar on the right. Chiefs and soldiers received the communion, and awaited the attack of the Pagans in close, wedgelike array. All day long the Danes assailed them in vain. Towards evening they used the stratagem of a feigned flight. The Saxons pursued without heeding the advice of their leaders to be cautious. When they were scattered over the field, the Danes turned upon them, and destroyed them almost to a man. From the field of battle the Danes proceeded to the Abbey of Croyland. The abbot had hidden his treasures, and sent his monks to hide themselves in the marshes. Only a few old



RUINS OF CROYLAND ABBEY.

men and children were left in the building. The abbot was slain as he was singing mass at the high altar, and all that were with him shared his fate, except one lad, Thurgar by name, on whom one of the Danish earls had pity, and who escaped a few days afterwards. From Croyland the Pagans went on to Peterborough. The monastery held out for a day against them, and one of their chiefs was wounded by a stone, it is said, in the attack. In revenge the Danes put every one to the sword, and burnt church and monastery to the ground. Within a few days the Abbey of Ely shared the same fate. Standing, as it did, on a hill surrounded by marshes, it seemed a safe place, and vast treasures had been collected there from all parts. Everything was plundered or destroyed by the Pagans.

The story of King Edmund is assigned to the year 870. He was the sub-king of East Anglia, and, venturing to attack a Danish force that issued from Thetford, was defeated. He fled from the field of battle, and hid himself under a bridge. But the glitter of his golden spurs as they shone in the moonlight revealed his presence to a passer-by, and he betrayed the King to the Danes. Hingvar, the Danish chief, offered Edmund his life if he would give up the Christian faith—so ran the story which his sword-bearer used to tell in after years in the Court of Athelstane, and which Archbishop Dunstan heard from his lips, and handed down to us. When he refused, the Danes bound him to a tree, and shot their arrows at him. At last Hingvar commanded that he should be beheaded. His remains were

privately buried by his followers, and afterwards removed to a town which afterwards received the name of St. Edmundsbury, and in which a splendid monastery was erected in his honour by the Danish king Canute.

East Anglia and Mercia were now helpless; but in Wessex the invaders met with an obstinate resistance. Early in the year they took up a position at Reading, which they strengthened with a rampart, constructed between the Thames and the Kennet.[1] A Danish division, which had gone as far as Englefield (near Staines, and as much as twenty miles from Reading), was attacked by Ethelwulf, Alderman of Berkshire, and defeated with great loss. Ethelwulf then joined his forces with those of the king, and attacked the Danes at Reading. The battle went against the English, and Ethelwulf was slain. Four days afterwards there was another fight at Ashdune (the Hill of the Ash).[2] Both armies were strong, and both threw up earthworks for defence. The Danes were commanded by two kings, who held the centre of the line, and a number of earls, who were posted on the two wings. The English, on the other hand, were led by King Ethelred and his younger brother Alfred. Alfred was the first to set his division in motion; Ethelred, who was busy hearing mass in his tent, and who would not stir till the divine office was

[1] The Kennet flows through Reading town; the Thames is about a mile distant. The ground between the two rivers is level, and the rampart was probably intended to fortify this side of the position.

[2] Probably not far from Lambourne Downs in West Berkshire. Ashdown Park and Ashbury preserve the name.

finished, was a long time in following him. Alfred, who was certainly not wanting in piety, refused to wait, and attacked the Danish wings. It had been arranged that the centre should be left to Ethelred. For a time the young prince bore the whole brunt of the battle. The crest of the hill was occupied by the Danes; the English came up from below to close with them. On the slope was a stunted thorn-tree ("which I myself," says the Chronicler, "have seen with my own eyes"), and it was here that the battle raged most fiercely. After a long struggle the Danes gave way. One of their kings fell on the field, and with him perished five earls and many thousand men. The survivors fled in confusion to "the stronghold from which they had sallied" (probably Reading), the English pursuing and slaying all they could reach. "Fourteen days after the struggle was renewed at Basing, in North Hampshire." This time the Danes were victorious. King Ethelred was wounded, and died "after Easter" (Easter fell this year on April 19th).

This narrative of the Danish war has carried me out of the chronological order of events. A short account of the successors of Egbert will complete this sketch of English history down to the time which I have now reached.

Ethelwulf, Egbert's son and immediate successor, was brought up by Swithun, a priest of Winchester, and was, perhaps, better fitted for a cloister than for a throne. In his first year (839) he formed the purpose of making a pilgrimage to Rome, though so closely was he occupied with the Danish wars, that

BRITAIN
827-829
English Miles
0 25 50 100
Eadwinesburh (Edinburgh)
Dynbaer (Dunbar)
Bebanburn
Strathclyde
NORTHUMBRIA
Tinemutha (Tynemouth)
Carleol (Carlisle)
Wiramutha
Heruten (Middlesborough)
Streoneshalch
Eoforwic (York)
The Humber
Lindicoln (Lincoln)
Dore
Legaceaster (Chester)
The Wash
Snotinga (Nottingham)
Scrobbesburh (Shrewsburg)
Offas Dyke
North Wales
Licetfeld (Lichfield)
East Anglia
Northwic (Norwich)
MERCIA
Wigornaceaster (Worcester)
Dunewic (Dunwich)
Eovesham (Evesham)
Gleawancester (Gloucester)
Cirenceaster
Heortford (Hertford)
Londonburh (London)
R. Thames
Maidultsburh
Bathanceaster (Bath)
Hreofesceaster (Rochester)
Cantwaraburh (Canterbury)
Glaestingaburh (Glastonbury)
Ellandun
Doresceaster
WESSEX
Taunton
Wintanceaster (Winchester)
Hengestesdun
Exanceaster (Exeter)
West Wales
Tamar
Walker & Boutall sc.

MAP 3—A.D. 827.

he was unable to carry it into effect till 855. In this year "he went to Rome in great state, and dwelt there for the space of twelve months." He gave many costly gifts to the churches, the clergy, and the people of Rome; and rebuilt the Saxon school, which had been destroyed by fire. According to some accounts the tax called "Peter's Pence" began in an endowment which Ethelwulf gave for the singing of masses for his soul. On his way home he was hospitably entertained by King Charles the Bald, whose daughter Judith he married. Judith was then twelve years old.

Something in the King's conduct, possibly this marriage, and the following elevation of Judith to the rank of queen, a title which no wife of a West Saxon king had held since the days of Sexburh,[1] seems to have offended his subjects. Anyhow we find his son Ethelbald conspiring with some of the bishops and nobles to prevent his return. The result was a compromise, and Ethelwulf contented himself with the eastern division of his kingdom. He died in 858, and was succeeded by his second and third sons (the eldest had died some years before). Ethelbald continued to reign in Wessex, of which, as has been said, he had made himself master before his father's death; Ethelbert took the eastern sub-kingdoms for his share, but, on his elder brother's death in 860, succeeded to the whole. He died in 866, and was succeeded by his next brother, Ethelred. Ethelred's reign of five years was, as we have seen, wholly occupied with the Danish war. Both he and Ethel-

[1] See p. 179.

bert left children, but it was not a time when children could reign. A king was wanted who could lead his armies in person, and Alfred, the youngest of the sons of Ethelwulf, was called to the throne.

XIX.

ALFRED, THE MAN OF WAR.

It is a happy circumstance that when we come to the greatest of England's early kings, perhaps we may say, the greatest of all kings that she has ever had, we find, for the first time, the story of his life told by one who knew him well. Asser, a Welshman by birth, and brought up in what we may call the Cathedral School of St. David's, has left a book entitled, "Annals of the Deeds of Alfred the Great." It abounds with little personal touches. The writer tells of Alfred's prowess as a hunter, and tells us that he has often seen proofs of it himself. He describes the battle of Ashdown, and speaks of the "stunted thorn tree," round which the battle raged most fiercely, as seen with his own eyes. In short, he lived with the great king as with a friend, and draws him, so to speak, from the life.[1]

Alfred was born in 849 at Wantage, in Berkshire, the youngest of the five sons of King Ethulwulf and Osburga, daughter of Oslac, the royal cupbearer.

[1] I must not conceal from my readers that the genuineness of Asser's "Life of Alfred" has been doubted. But the great weight of competent opinion is in favour of receiving it.

Oslac was of Jutish race, and traced his descent from Stuf, one of the two brothers to whom Cerdic gave the Isle of Wight. The King seems to have had a special affection for his youngest son. He sent him in his fifth year, with a great train of nobles, to Rome, where Pope Leo IV. is said to have anointed him king, a strange thing if, indeed, it be true,[1] as the boy had then three, if not four, brothers older than himself. Another visit to Rome, this time in company with his father, is recorded by Asser under the year 855.

"As he grew through infancy and boyhood," says the Chronicler, "he was seen to be more comely of form than his brothers, more gracious in look and speech and manner of life. From his cradle there was implanted in him by the nobility of his disposition a love of wisdom above all other things. Nevertheless, shameful to relate, by the unworthy neglect of his parents and tutors, he remained wholly untaught till the twelfth year of his age, and even beyond. Nevertheless, listening with thoughtful attention night and day to Saxon poems as they were recited by others, he teachably kept them in remembrance. In hunting of every kind he practised assiduously and with success; no one could compare with him for skill and good fortune in this matter, as we have ourselves often witnessed. Now on a certain day his mother[2] showed to him and his

[1] Asser could hardly have had personal knowledge of it.

[2] If the story is true, this must have been his stepmother Judith. His own mother is said to have died when he was seven years old. Judith was married to Ethelwulf in the year 856, and when she came to England Alfred was in his thirteenth year.

brothers a certain book of Saxon poetry which she had in her hand, and said, 'Whoever of you shall most quickly learn this book shall have it, to him will I give it.' Fired by these words, and verily by a divine inspiration, and greatly charmed also by the beauty of the first letter of this book, he made answer to his mother, 'Wilt thou verily give this book to one of us, even to him who shall most speedily be able to understand it, and to repeat it before thee?' Thereupon she laughed in much joy, and said, 'Verily I will give it to him.' Thereupon he took it out of her hand, and going to his teacher read it, and having read it, brought it back to his mother and recited it. After this he learned the daily course, that is, the Hours; and after these certain Psalms and many prayers, which, collected in one volume, he kept day and night in his bosom, as I have myself seen, carrying it about with him incessantly to assist him in his prayers, amidst all the business of his life. . . . This he would declare, with many deep sighs, to have been one of the greatest hindrances of his life, that when he was of the age to learn, and had leisure and capacity, he could not find teachers; but when he was more advanced in years, he suffered from diseases unknown to all physicians of the island, and was harassed by the cares of sovereignty within and without, and was distracted by incessant attacks of the heathen so that he could not read."

We shall see that, in spite of these hindrances, Alfred contrived to do much good work in the way of reading and writing. The chief of the ailments from which he suffered seems to have been epilepsy.

In his twentieth year he married Ealswith, daughter of Ethelred, Alderman of Lincolnshire, and in the midst of the wedding festivities, was struck down by an attack of this disease. The fits recurred frequently during the remainder of life, and, as he died in the prime of his manhood (his fifty-first year), probably shortened it.

The story of Alfred up to the time of his accession to the throne has already been told. Ethelred, we have seen, died about the end of April in the year 871. Within a month the new king was called to renew his struggle with the invaders. "He fought," says Asser, "against the whole army of the Pagans at a certain hill called Wilton that is on the south bank of the river Willy, from which river the whole county[1] is named, having but few men with him." After a fierce fight, in which Alfred had at first the upper hand, the Danes remained masters of the field of battle. Both sides were now exhausted. Eight battles, and skirmishes without number, had been fought in a single year, with a loss of men which it was impossible to estimate. Peace was made, and for a time Wessex was free from Danish attacks.

The supremacy attained by Egbert had for the time ceased to exist; and the treaty made by Alfred with the invaders did nothing for the rest of England. Mercia and Northumbria had to deal on their own account with the Danes, and sometimes resisted, sometimes made terms with them. East Anglia was wholly in their power. In 874 Buhred, King of Mercia, driven to despair by what he saw about him,

[1] Wiltshire.

fled from England, and sought refuge in Rome, where he died soon after his arrival. The Danes became undisputed masters of Mercia, where they appointed as sub-king a certain "foolish lord" of Buhred, foolish, doubtless, because he was willing to accept so thankless an office. He was to answer for the tribute, and peaceably to surrender up his power whenever they should demand it.

In the following year Northumbria was conquered, and even the country north of the Tyne was ravaged. An independent squadron of six pirate ships found its way the same year to the south coast. King Alfred encountered them, captured one, and put the rest to flight.

In 876 this was followed by a more formidable attack by the main body of the Danes in England. The three kings, Guthrum, Oskylet, and Amund, who had wintered at Cambridge, took ship, and sailing westward, seized the town of Wareham in Dorsetshire. Alfred made a treaty with them, paying at the same time, according to one account, a sum of money, and they vowed in the most solemn manner that they would leave his kingdom. This promise was at once broken, for some of their horsemen made their way into Devonshire, and surprised the stronghold of Exeter.

After this things grew worse and worse. Streams of Northmen poured into the only part of the island that still held out against them. Alfred constructed a fleet, but, in default of English seamen, was obliged to man it with "pirates." With his army he besieged Exeter. A Danish fleet of a hundred and twenty ships, after being detained at sea by rough

weather for a whole month, was seen off Swanwick. The King's ships encountered, attacked, and, unless the Chronicles exaggerate, entirely destroyed the invaders. The Danish leaders in Exeter now agreed to give up that place. But they only changed the scene of their ravages, seizing the "royal town" of Chippenham in Wiltshire. At the same time another Danish fleet was ravaging the north coast of Devonshire (Kenwith near Bideford). Here they met with a fierce resistance. "The Pagans," says Asser, "seeing that the fort was altogether unprepared, except that it had walls after our fashion, but that it was impregnable and safe on all sides save the eastern (as I have myself seen), determined to blockade it. For they thought that the men therein would speedily surrender under constraint of hunger and thirst, there being no water. But things did not so turn out; for the Christians, before they were reduced to such straits, by divine inspiration, judging it better either to conquer or to die, at dawn made a sudden sally on the Pagans, and slew many of the enemy, together with their king, a few only escaping to their ships. They took also no little spoil, in the which was the standard which they call the Raven. This standard the three sisters of Heinga and Habba wove, finishing it in one single noontide. They say also that every battle, whensoever this standard went before the host, if they were to win the day, then would be seen in the midst of it as it were a live raven flying; but if, on the other hand, they were to be conquered, it would hang straight down and wave not at all. And this was often proved to be true."

With Alfred himself things were going very badly. His kingdom had, for the time, passed from him. He was not, as is sometimes represented, a lonely fugitive; some following he always had. Ethelnoth, Alderman of Somersetshire, and a few nobles are said to have been with him. "With these," says Asser, "he led a troubled life in the woodland parts of Somersetshire, not having any means of living except such as he could take by frequent forages from the Pagans and from such of the Christians as had submitted themselves to them."

Here comes in the famous story of the cakes, which, told as it has been already a thousand times, must be told once more. "It fell out on a certain day that a countrywoman, the wife of a certain herdsman with whom the King sojourned, was baking cakes at the fire. And the King sitting by the hearth made ready his bow and arrows and other implements of warfare. But when the woman saw that the cakes set by the fire were burning, she ran in haste and took them away, reproaching the valiant king, and saying, 'Why dost thou tarry to turn the cakes which thou seest burning, seeing how glad thou art to eat them when they are baked?'"[1]

At Athelney (the "Island of Princes"), a place between Taunton and Somersetshire, where a marsh had been formed by the confluence of the Parret and the Thone, Alfred constructed a fort.[1] This served

[1] Translated by Dr. Giles into modern Somersetshire:

"Ca'sn thee mind the keaks, man, and doossen zee 'em burn?
I'm boun thee's eat them vast enough, az zoon az tiz the turn."

[2] An interesting memorial of his presence at this place is to be seen

as a base of his operations. His subjects, inspirited by his dauntless courage, began to gather round him, and it was not long before he felt himself able to attack the invaders.[1] It was after he had been making preparations for seven months at Athelney that he met the men of Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Somersetshire on the eastern border of Selwood Forest. "When they saw the King, they welcomed him, as was fitting, with great joy as one that was alive again after many and great troubles. Two days afterwards they attacked the Danish army at Ethandun, probably Eddington near Westbury, in Wiltshire. There they fought "bravely and steadfastly against all the army of the Pagans." The battle was long and obstinate, but in the end the Danes gave way, and Alfred pursued them to their camp. Fourteen days afterwards, the besieged, worn out by hunger, for they probably had made no provision against a siege, sent envoys to beg for a truce. They offered to give as many hostages as Alfred might require, to ask none in return, and to leave the kingdom as speedily as possible. These terms were accepted. King Guthrum, with thirty of his chiefs, was baptized, Alfred himself standing as his sponsor, and giving him the second name of Athelstan. This took place in the early summer of 878. Guthrum

in a bracelet of gold, found at Athelney, and now preserved in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. It bears the inscription *Ælfred het mek gewircan*, "Alfred commanded me to be made."

[1] The romantic story of how the King disguised himself as a harper, made his way into the Danish camp, and learnt the numbers and plans of the enemy, is not found in Asser. It may be true, but it does not rest on good authority.

went to Cirencester, and the next year retired to East Anglia. There he remained till the end of his life, in 890, faithful to his compact.

Alfred had saved his kingdom, and had henceforward some leisure for the duties of a wise and far-seeing ruler, but a half, and that the greater half of England, was lost to the English. Wessex and the sub-kingdom of Kent still belonged to the King. English Mercia, reaching as far as the Ribble on the north, acknowleged his supremacy. Wales and Cornwall probably paid him some show of homage. But much of Central and all Eastern England was practically a foreign, and almost a hostile, country. It was thenceforward the Dane-country, the *Dane-law.* Any allegiance that it paid to the English king was paid for the time only, and under the constraint of superior strength. Sometimes it became actively hostile. And when the Danes set about a regular conquest of England, as they may be said to have done about a hundred years after Alfred's death, they found at least half their work done ready to their hand.

But for the time there was relief. Independent freebooters still roamed the sea. We hear, for instance, under the year 882, how King Alfred went out to sea with his fleet, and fought with four pirate ships of the Danes, and how he took two of them, when their crews had been slain, and how the two remaining surrendered themselves, but not till the men therein had been grievously wounded. But the activity of the Northmen was mainly displayed elsewhere. In 880 they besieged Ghent ; in the following year one body of

them penetrated into France, and another landed on the east coast of Scotland. In 883 a Danish fleet sailed up the Scheldt. It was in this year that Alfred felt himself so far delivered from his troubles that he could pay the vows which he had made in the hour of danger. "Sighelm and Athelstan carried to Rome the alms which King Alfred had vowed; and the King sent also to India to the shrines of St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew."

In 885 there were troubles in Kent and East Anglia. Rochester was besieged by the Pagans, but held out till it was relieved by the King. This done, he sent his fleet into East Anglia. Coming to the mouth of the Stour (the river which divides Essex and Suffolk) "there met it sixteen ships of the Pagans. With them the English fought, and took all the ships, and slew the men. But while they were returning home with much booty they fell in with a great armament of the Pagans. With this they fought that same day, but the Danes won the victory." In the following year the king "rebuilt London, and the whole nation of the English turned to him save such as were under the power of the Danes." This probably indicates what may be called the high-water mark of Alfred's power. For seven years the land had peace. All that the Chronicler has to say about the Danes is to tell us of their doings abroad. Even the death of Guthrum in 890 did not cause any trouble.

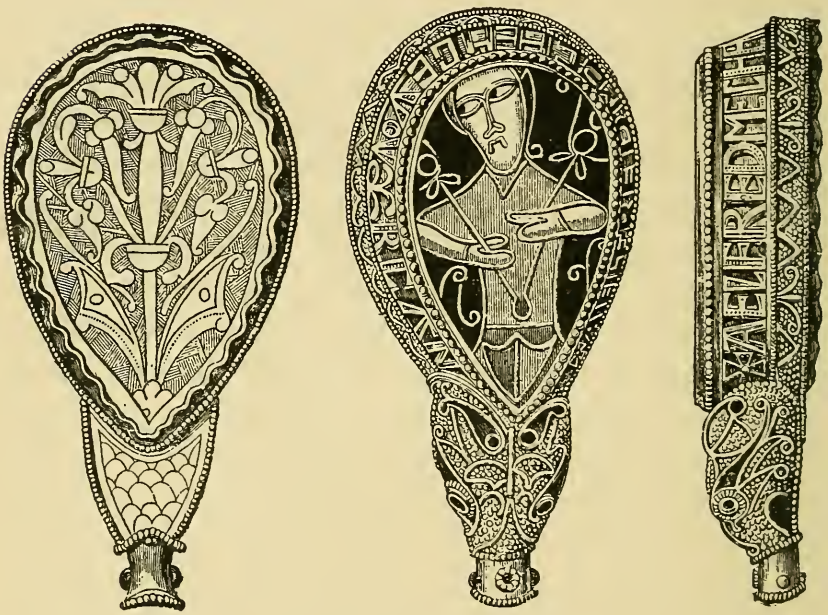
In 893 the struggle began again. A Danish army crossed over from Boulogne to Lymme with two hundred and fifty ships. Another, with eighty ships,

under a famous leader of the name of Hasting,[1] sailed up the Thames, and fortified a position at Milton (on the Medway) and Appledore (about six miles south-east of Tenterden, in Kent). The East Anglians, though professing to be faithful to Alfred, really assisted the invaders. The King's tactics seem to have been most skilful. He pitched his camp in a place protected by woods and amply supplied with water, and dividing the two Danish armies from each other. From this position he watched the movements of both. One half of his forces always guarded the camp; the other kept the field. The Danes attempted to carry the plunder which they had collected northward across the Thames into the Dane-law. Alfred came up with them at Farnham,[2] and defeated them. They fled across the river without trying to reach a ford, and thence to an island in the marshes of the Colne. There Alfred besieged them, though to carry on a siege was difficult when there was no regular commissariat, and the army was on short service. On the other hand, the Danes could not leave the place, their king having been so severely wounded that he could

[1] Hasting had been a fellow-leader with Guthrum in the war that had been concluded by the Peace of Wedmore. He had then retired to France. But his position there had become unsafe. Accordingly we find him again in England. Two great causes were putting an end to the tranquillity which our island had enjoyed for some time. The Northmen had to yield to the superior force brought against them upon the Continent, while at home the growing power of the kings caused the chiefs who were unwilling to submit to a master to migrate, in search of a free home elsewhere.

[2] So the Chronicler says. But the Farnham in Surrey seems too much to the south. Perhaps it was, however, Farnborough, near Bromley, in Kent. The narrative shows that they were on the south side of the Thames.

not be moved. Before long, Alfred was called elsewhere. The Northumbrian and East Anglian Danes had manned a fleet of a hundred ships, and sailing southward and westward, had besieged a fortress, the name of which is not given, on the Devonshire coast, and the inland town of Exeter. The King marched with the main body of his army to Exeter, while he



ANGLO-SAXON JEWELS.

sent a strong force to London under the command of his son Edward ; Hasting had built a fort at Benfleet (north of Canvey Island in the estuary of the Thames). When the English army arrived he was absent on a plundering expedition. The Danes were defeated, and the fort taken, with a great amount of plunder, and many Danish women and children.

Among these were the wife and two sons of Hasting himself. The boys had been baptized, Alfred himself having stood sponsor for one and one of his nobles for the other. Alfred with characteristic generosity sent them back, and handsome presents with them, to the Danish king. Meanwhile he reached and relieved Exeter. In the same year a Danish army, reinforced by some of their countrymen from East Anglia and Northumbria, made its way up the valley of the Thames, and thence into that of the Upper Severn. It was besieged at Bultington in Montgomeryshire by the Thanes of Western England, the King himself being employed with his operations in Devonshire. After holding out for several weeks, during which they had been driven to eat their horses, the Danes broke out of their entrenchments, and attempted to cut their way through the English army. They suffered a heavy loss in killed and prisoners, but some escaped to their old quarters in East Anglia. But they did not rest in them. Probably the country was too exhausted to yield them support. Their next movement was to Werral in Cheshire. They marched on that place with all speed, outstripping the pursuit of Alfred's forces, and finding the fort empty, occupied it. The English laid waste all the country in the neighbourhood, and cut off such stragglers as showed themselves outside the walls. The Danes abandoned the place, and made their way into North Wales, and from thence back again into Northumbria and East Anglia. About the same time those who had been fighting in Devonshire also retreated eastward, but were not permitted to escape without loss.

In 896 the struggle ceased for a time. The year indeed began with a disaster. The Danes had built a fort on the river Lee, about twenty miles from London. In the course of the summer the Londoners attempted to storm this place, but were repulsed with heavy loss, four Thanes falling in the assault. Somewhat later Alfred himself took the command. His keen eye discovered a spot where the river might be so blocked that the retreat of the Danish ships would be cut off. He set about the work at once. The Danes perceived their danger, and abandoning their fleet marched westward to Quatbridge (near Bridgenorth in Shropshire). This was practically the end of the war. The next summer, such of the invaders as had homes in Northumbria and East Anglia, returned to them; the rest took ship and sailed to France and up the Seine. "The Pagan army," says the Chronicler, "thanks be to God! had not yet broken the race of Englishmen; this verily was much more broken during these three years by the plague among cattle, and most of all by the plague among men; for of the noblest of the King's Thanes there died many in the said years." And he goes on to give a list of bishops and nobles that had so passed away.

One more story is told of Alfred's valorous deeds against the heathen, and then his wars are at an end. "There came men from East Anglia and Northumbria ravaging the land of the West Saxons. And Alfred the King commanded that they should make long ships to contend with their vessels. Twice as long were they, and some had sixty oars, and some yet more. Swifter were they, and steadier, and more

lofty also. They were made neither after the fashion of the Frisian ships, nor after that of the Danes ; but as the King judged they would be most useful. In that same year there came six ships, and did no small damage to the men of Devonshire, and to the other coasts. So the King commanded that they should go forth with nine of the new ships and keep them from going forth of the harbour. Then the pirates went out with three ships against them, but three were left on the dry land, for from these the sailors had gone forth to plunder. The King's ships took two of the three that came forth, slaying all the men, and in the third they left but five alive. But when three of the King's ships had run on the ground, and their fellows could not come to them, the Danes that were left in the three ships aforesaid came and fought against them. Then many were slain, that is to say, of the Frisians and Englishmen sixty-two, and of the Danes one hundred and twenty. But because the tide came to the Danish ships before the English could launch theirs on the deep the Danes were able to escape. Nevertheless their ships were so sore wounded that they were cast ashore. And the men were taken to the King at Winchester, who commanded that they should be hanged."

We need not suppose that Alfred was less generous to enemies than he had been in past days. But the Danes had become a settled power, who, in some sense, shared the island with him. These lawless rovers, plundering on their own account, could no longer be endured, and must be treated as enemies of the human race.

For the next four years the Chronicler has nothing to record but the death of Edhelm, Alderman of Wiltshire, and Heahstan, Bishop of London. Then under 901 we read: "in this year died Alfred, son of Ethelwulf, six nights before the feast of All Saints [*i.e.*, on October 26th]. He was king over the whole English nation, save that part which was under the Danes. He had ruled for thirty years less by half a year, and Edward his son reigned in his stead." He does not add a single word of praise. The record of what he had done for England was praise enough.

XX.

ALFRED, THE MAN OF PEACE.

GREAT as Alfred was, he would have been more than man, if he had done all the things which have been attributed to him. As Lappenburg puts it, "To the hero to whom the nation owed so much it gratefully ascribed all, and the name of Alfred became adorned with the glory of Cyrus, Theseus, Numa, and Charlemagne." He is said, for instance, to have founded the institution of trial by jury, whereas it was an immemorial custom of the Teutonic tribes that a man should be tried by his peers, *i.e.*, by his equals. Some, again, have given him the credit of dividing England into shires, hundreds, and parishes. We may be certain that such a division could not be the work of one man, that it must grow up gradually, and take many generations to complete. His work as a maker of laws may be described in his own words. "I, Alfred the King, gathered together these laws, and had many of them written which our forefathers held, those that I approved. And many of them that I approved not, I cast aside by the counsel of my wise men. I durst not write down much of my own, but those which I met with in the days

ANGLO-SAXON CALENDAR—REAPING.

(*From the original MS.*)

either of Ine, my kinsman, or of Offa, King of the Mercians, or of Ethelbert, who first of English race received baptism, such as seemed to me the best I have gathered herein, and the others I have thrown aside." He speaks, it will be seen, of nothing new. The new thing is that the laws of Wessex, of Mercia, and of Kent, are brought together to make a common law of England.

In the *administration* of justice his hand was probably felt more directly. Here the need of a strong and righteous ruler was especially needed. *Inter arma silent leges*, "Laws are silenced before the sword," was a Roman saying, and in Alfred's days the sword was everywhere. The nobles were too powerful; the judges feeble and ignorant. Alfred is said to have taken from the aldermen some of their powers, and to have handed them over to judges. To the doings of the judges themselves he looked most closely. He urged them to make themselves acquainted with their business. Causes that they decided ignorantly he himself reviewed. Where he found that they had acted corruptly he visited them with the severest punishment.

In other branches of government his work was great and useful. "His budget," says Mr. Green, "is the first royal budget that we possess." He divided his revenue into two parts, devoting one to civil, the other to ecclesiastic purposes. The former was again divided into three parts: one went to his "men-of-war and noble thanes." In these we see a curious anticipation of the great officers of State of modern times. They spent one month, we are told, in the King's

Court, and gave two to their own private affairs. A second third was spent on the "workmen skilled in all kinds of building, whom he had gathered and brought together from all nations in numbers almost beyond counting." The last portion was assigned to strangers that came to him from foreign parts, and this whether they asked for his help or no.

Of the ecclesiastical part of the revenue a fourfold division was made. One went to the poor; another to the two monasteries which he had himself founded (at Athelney and Shaftesbury); a third to his school for young nobles; the fourth to all the monasteries and churches, not only in England, but in the British kingdom, in Northumbria, and even Ireland and France.

It will be thought, perhaps, that only a small part of the royal revenue went to what we call the military, naval, and civil services. But it will be remembered that these were still mainly supported by local means. But here also Alfred seems to have made changes which tended to make these services stronger and more permanent.

Of the navy we have heard already. This indeed seems to have been almost a creation of Alfred's. We hear nothing of a fleet before his time. But during his reign we hear again and again of ships being built of new and improved designs for their construction. There is nothing in which the great king stands out more clearly as the founder of England's power.

The army was not, of course, called into existence by him in anything like the same way. There had

always been an army in which every able-bodied man was bound to serve. This would have been a vast force with which no invader could possibly have coped, if it could ever have been brought, or, when brought, kept together. Here was the difficulty. Every man had his own occupations, which he was loath to leave, and to which he was very anxious to return. However willing he might be to serve, he often could not provide himself with the necessary arms. When an army had been brought together it was not easy to feed it. The invading Danes, on the other hand, were from the very necessity of the case, a standing army. They might be beaten by the levies which were hastily brought against them. But when these levies had dispersed to their own homes, they were still there. This is a summary of the difficulties which Alfred had to meet, and he and his successors did it in this way. Every five hides of land[1] sent a soldier to the king's army, furnishing him with arms, victuals, and pay. At the same time every free man was still bound to serve in case of need. The force thus raised was divided into two parts, which were called into the field by turn, the other remaining at home to defend their own townships.[2]

But Alfred's greatest services to his country were done in the field of education, letters, and learning. That he founded the University of Oxford is undoubtedly a fiction, though indeed a few years ago

[1] A hide of land = 120 acres. This may be taken as an approximation, but it is doubtful whether the hide always meant the same.

[2] I must express here my special obligations to Mr. J. R. Green's "Conquest of England."

University College celebrated its thousandth anniversary on the strength of the story. But there was certainly a school attached to his palace in which young nobles were taught, and where "books in both languages, the Latin, that is to say, and the English, were continually read." The monasteries which he founded or supported had also schools attached to them, and were regarded by the King as promoters of education as well as of learning. Scholars were invited from other lands to help him. Thus Plegmund was called from Mercia, and was promoted to the Archbishopric of Canterbury. Grimbald was invited from St. Omer, and Asser, who was afterwards to write the life of his patron, as we have seen, from St. David's. To this list a more doubtful account adds the famous philosopher, John Scotus, or Erigena, who is said to have been invited from the Court of Charles the Bald.

But Alfred did not content himself with giving money or land to schools and other places of learning, or with hospitably entertaining scholars from other lands. He set the example of a diligent love of letters. He found time amidst all the distractions of war and of government to be a student and a writer. When he was nearly forty he had at last the opportunity of learning Latin. At his accession, indeed, as he tells us himself, very few south of the Humber, and not one south of the Thames, could translate from Latin into English. This was the deplorable state of things which he had to remedy, and he remedied it by his own personal exertions. He is not indeed the first of royal authors ; but his author-

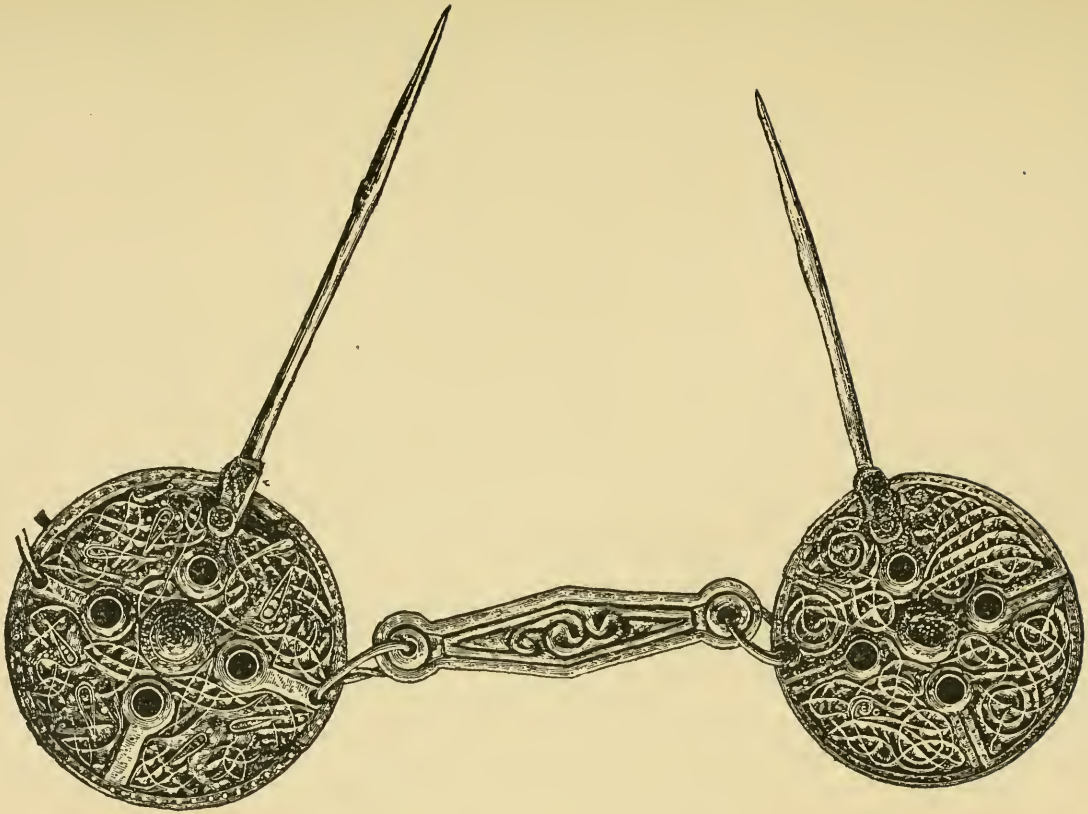
ship has the extraordinary merit of coming out under the greatest difficulties. Occupied almost incessantly with the business of war or of peace, beset by frequent illness, and living in an age of ignorance, he yet made himself a man of learning and letters.

His chief works, and though many others have been attributed to him, perhaps we may say, his only works, were translations. One of these was his version of the "Liber Pastoralis" of Gregory the Great. His preface to this modestly describes his motives and his method. "When I remembered how the knowledge of Latin had formerly decayed throughout England, and yet many could read English writing, I began among other manifold and various troubles of this kingdom to translate into English the book which is called in Latin, 'Pastoralis,' and in English, 'Shepherd's Book,' sometimes word by word, and sometimes according to the sense, as I had learnt it from Plegmund, my archbishop, and Asser, my bishop, and Grimbald, my mass-priest, and John, my mass-priest." The "Liber Pastoralis" is a treatise on the duties of a Christian minister, and was in Alfred's time and for long afterwards regarded as a standard work. Another book which the King translated was the "Historia" of Orosius, a Spanish priest of the fifth century, and a disciple of Augustine of Hippo. This is an attempt at Universal History, beginning with the Creation of the world, and carried down to A.D. 417. Then again he translated the "Ecclesiastical History" of the Venerable Bede, and the "Consolations of Philosophy," written by Boethius, 470–524 A.D.

But he did not always content himself with translating. He added, for instance, to his version of Orosius, a description of Germany and Northern Europe, which he drew from the travels of two subjects of his own, Wulstan and Ohthere. He inserts reflections of his own on politics or religion in other treatises. It has been thought that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle owes to him not only its form in the language of the people, but something of the spirit and fulness with which the events of his own time are narrated.[1] The English tongue had had, indeed, its poetry long before Alfred's time. No man ever loved that poetry better than did the great king. We have seen how he learnt it diligently in his boyhood, and we are told that he taught it to his children. But every nation that is lifted at all out of the merest savagery has poetry. Its literature begins when prose is written in its language. In this sense Alfred is the founder, in a sense in which no man in the world's history can be said to be, of a literature, and that the most widely read and richest literature that there is.

It is very interesting to hear of the methods by which this scholar-king contrived to accomplish so vast an amount of work. "Of a quantity of wax," says Asser, "weighing seventy-two pennies, he caused

[1] "It is from the death of Ethelwulf that the Roll widens into a continuous narrative, a narrative full of life and originality, where vigour and freshness mark the gift of a new power to the English tongue. The appearance of such a work in their own mother speech could not fail to produce a deep impression on the people whose story it told. With it English history became the heritage of the English people. Baeda had left it accessible merely to noble or priest; Alfred was the first to give it to the people at large" ("The Conquest of England," p. 167).



JEWELS OF ALFRED THE GREAT.

six candles to be made of equal weight, and each of twelve inches in length. These, he found, were burnt out in exactly twenty-four hours. To prevent them from being extinguished or wasted by the air that came from the doors and crevices in the walls, he caused lanterns of wood and fine horn to be made, by which they were sufficiently protected." It is curious to see how the mechanical inventions of classical times had been forgotten, or at least disused. The water-clock would have been a simpler method of reckoning time ; but no mention is made of it. But our admiration of Alfred's genius is increased by this proof of the rudeness of the times in which he lived, and even by the little glimpse that we get of his royal dwelling, so indifferently built that candles might be extinguished by draughts that blew from its doors and even from cracks in its walls.

There is another thing in Alfred which must not be forgotten—his goodness. To courage, steadfastness, prudence, knowledge of men and capacity of rule, and learning, he added a personal righteousness and purity that is not easily to be matched in the records of mankind. "Ælfred," says Mr. Freeman, "is the most perfect character in history." [1]

[1] This is summing up of an eloquent panegyric, that is, however, not more eloquent than just. The reader will find it in "The Norman Conquest," vol. i. pp. 48–52.

XXI.

EDWARD THE ELDER, AND ATHELSTAN.

ALFRED was succeeded by his eldest son Edward (called the Elder to distinguish him from another Edward, who reigned some seventy years later). This prince, who had distinguished himself in the victory over Hasting, was chosen by the Assembly, but there was a party which upheld the claims of Ethelwold, son of the late king's elder brother Ethelred.[1] Ethelwold rose in rebellion, and seized the royal town of Wimborne. The King at once

[1] Ethelred's sons, being children at the time of their father's death, had been passed over in favour of their uncle Alfred. This was the custom of the time; it was necessary that a king should be a grown man, who could lead his armies to battle. As this, the first and simplest idea of kingship, grew into something more complex, and the king was surrounded by ministers and officers of state who did for him some of his work, it was found better to keep closely to the hereditary principle. The pretensions of Ethelwold showed the inconveniences of the older plan. When the prince who had been passed over on account of his youth had grown to manhood, he had a claim which it might be difficult either to allow or to reject.

marched against him, and pitched his camp at Badbury,[1] four miles and a half north-east of Wimborne. The pretender had declared that he would not leave Wimborne alive. Nevertheless, he made his escape, and, outstripping the forces sent in pursuit, reached Northumbria. The Danes were not slow to recognize the advantage of having with them a pretender to the English Crown, and made him their king. The alliance was dangerous to Edward, but it showed that Danes and English were no longer strangers to each other. In 903 the pretenders brought, from "parts beyond the sea," says the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a great fleet of Danes. Shortly afterwards, in company with the Danes of East Anglia, he invaded Mercia, then under the government of Ethelred and, it should be added, his wife, Ealswith, daughter of Alfred. They reached Cricklade, and crossing the Thames, plundered the region which still goes by the name of Bradon (west of Swindon in Wiltshire) which the Anglo-Saxon Chronicler gives it. Edward, in revenge, marched into East Anglia and laid waste the whole region between St. Edmund's Dyke and the Greater Ouse. When a retreat was ordered the Kentish forces refused to move after repeated commands from the King. Ethelwulf and the Danes attacked them, and a fierce battle ensued. Two aldermen, a king's thane, and other men of note fell on the English side; on the other hand, both Ethelwulf and the Danish king of East Anglia were slain. Edward had now no rival, and in 906 he was

[1] Remains of a camp are still to be seen on a hill which bears the name of "Badbury Rings."

able to make peace with the two Danish kingdoms, a peace seems to have remained in force for nearly four years.

In 910 the Danes began again to move. Edward sent an army into Northumbria, which, after suffering five weeks of ravage, was glad to ask for peace. The East Anglians, who had invaded Mercia, were defeated at Tettenhall in Staffordshire. The next year Edward collected a fleet of a hundred ships on the south-eastern coast. We do not know the object he had in view, but it has been conjectured [1] that he wished to help Charles the Simple against Rollo, who in this year became possessed of the province of Normandy. The Northumbrians saw their opportunity, and, bursting into Mercia, plundered the valleys of the Avon and the Lower Severn. The English army overtook them, as they were retreating, laden with plunder. In the battle that followed two Danish kings and a number of nobles were slain. For some years after this defeat the Danes gave but little trouble, and Edward had leisure to consolidate his kingdom.

Ethelred, sub-king of Mercia, died in 912, and Edward was then able to incorporate into his kingdom London and Oxford. The widow of the Mercian prince survived him for eight years, and during that time heartily joined hands with her brother.

Their first work was to provide fortresses which might at once serve to defend the kingdom and to furnish bases of attacks on the Dane-law. Edward

[1] Lappenberg, ii. 89.

built one at Hertford and another at Witham (eight miles north-east of Chelmsford in Essex); Ethelfled built others at Bridgenorth, Tamworth, Stamford Warwick, and elsewhere.

While Edward was engaged in strengthening his power in Eastern England, his sister was busy in the West. Owen, a Welsh sub-king, had invaded Mercia. Ethelfled drove him out, and, following him into Wales, took by storm the town of Brecknock. He escaped and fled to Derby, which was held by the Danes. Derby was stormed, not without much loss to the English army, and Owen killed himself.

The English power continued to advance. The Danish fortress of Tempsford (in Bedfordshire), Northampton, Colchester, fell into the hands of Edward, to whom the people of East Anglia and Essex, after a subjection of many years to the Pagans, gladly gave in their allegiance. The Danes at the same time acknowledged him as their overlord. Ethelfled, on her part, gained possession of Leicester by the surrender of the Danish garrison. The example of surrender was followed by the Danes of York. This was the last success of her life. She died at Tamworth on the 12th of June, 920.

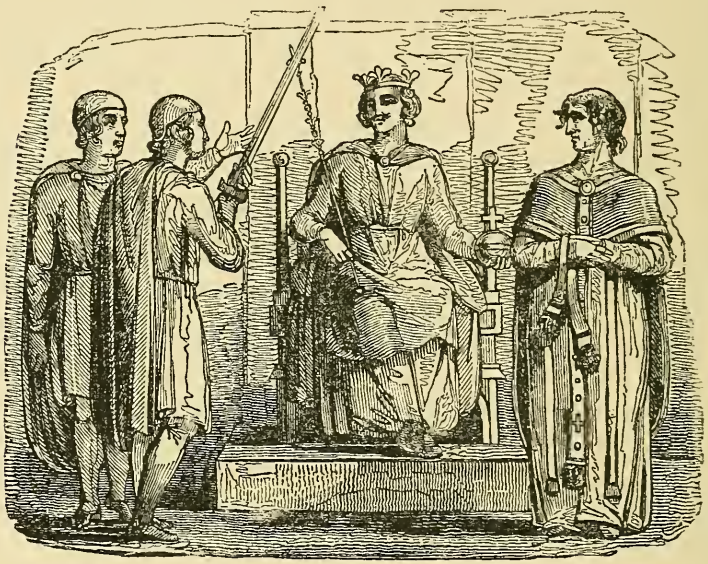
Serious as was this loss to King Edward, it had the effect of greatly strengthening his position. The daughter whom Ethelfled had left did not succeed to her power, and Mercia became a part of the English kingdom. With the new power that this increase of dominion gave him, Edward proceeded in his work of bringing the Danes under his sway. It would be tedious to give the details of this work. What was

done in Eastern England has been seen already. In the West and North it was equally successful. Under the year 824 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle relates: "The King of the Scots chose him for lord and father, and also all the race of the Scots. Also Regnulf and the son of Eadulf and all as many as dwelt in Northumbria, whether English, or Danes, or Northmen, and also the King of Strathclyde and all the people of Strathclyde." The following year the King died at Faringdon in Berkshire, and was buried at Winchester.

There was no one to do for Edward what Bishop Asser did for Alfred—describe him to the generations to come. That he was an able ruler is sufficiently clear from the story of his achievements. He found his work indeed half, or more than half, done, but he finished it with consummate skill, without suffering, as far as we know, a single check. "He was equal to his father," says Florence of Worcester, "as a warrior and ruler; and inferior only in learning." Higher praise there could not be.

Edward left five sons and nine daughters. The eldest of the sons seems to have been of inferior birth; various accounts are given of his mother Egwin. One writer speaks of her as "a noble lady," others as "a shepherd's daughter." Probably she was not of a rank sufficient to entitle her to the full dignity of a wife. However this may be, her son Athelstan became a favourite of his grandfather Alfred. As if to show that he considered him to be of princely rank, he gave him a purple cloak, a jewelled belt, and a Saxon sword in a scabbard of

gold. We hear little or nothing of the prince's doings during his father's life-time ; but he seems to have shown courage and ability, for Edward named him in his will as his successor. His second, Ethelward, may have been in such feeble health that it was necessary to pass him over. Anyhow, he died a few days after his father. The others were too young to



INSTALLATION OF A SAXON KING.

succeed. Athelstan, on the contrary, was in the full vigour of manhood[1] when he was crowned at Kingston by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Athelstan found, if not a biographer, at least a writer who would describe him with peculiar interest and affection. This was William, a monk of Malmesbury, and one of the most learned and sensible of the

[1] He seems to have been thirty years of age.

monkish chroniclers. William of Malmesbury was born about 1085, that is, a century and a half after Athelstan's death. But though he was not a contemporary like Asser, he found in his monastery many traditions and, it would seem, at least one contemporary record of the King.[1] From this he probably gets the features of the portrait which he draws. "He was, as we have heard, of proper stature; thin in person; his hair flaxen, and beautifully wreathed with golden threads." He adds, after mentioning the colour of the king's hair, "as I have seen by his reliques." He was liberal, "prescribing to himself this rule of conduct, never to hoard up riches. . . To the clergy he was humble and affable; to the laity, mild and pleasant; to the nobility, somewhat reserved from respect to his dignity; to the common people kindly condescending."

Athelstan's first act was to give his sister (her name is not known) in marriage to Sihtric, King of the Northumbrian Danes. But the next year Sihtric was killed by his subjects, who may have resented his alliance with the English, or the baptism which was one of its conditions. Athelstan seemed to have had little difficulty in possessing himself of the vacant kingdom. Sihtric's two sons by a former marriage

[1] Athelstan was a liberal benefactor to Malmesbury Abbey. His gifts to the monks have gone the way of all such benefactions, but the town of Malmesbury still enjoys his liberality. The "commoners" have the free occupation of a considerable piece of land, given, the local tradition has it, in consideration of the aid which the townsmen rendered to the King in one of his battles with the Danes. It is difficult to see how the Danes could have been found at any time in Athelstan's reign in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury. Possibly if the gift was for services in war it referred to a past time.

were expelled. One fled to Ireland, the other, after various wanderings, surrendered himself to the English king. He was hospitably entertained, but, after four days at Court, he "resought his ships, an incorrigible pirate, and accustomed to live in the water like a fish." The stronghold which the Danes had built at York was destroyed, but in other respects they were treated as equals. The nobles retained the power which they had had under their native ruler. But the King of the West Saxons was now also King of the Northern Dane-law. In the same year the Kings of Strathclyde and North Wales acknowledged Athelstan's supremacy. The West Welsh or Cornishmen seem to have resisted him. They were expelled from the part of the town at Exeter which they had hitherto occupied, and the Tamar, which still divides the counties of Devon and Cornwall, was made their eastern boundary.

Athelstan was now, more really than any of his predecessors, an English king, and this, not by right of conquest only, but of government. "In the number and variety of the attendants of his Witanagemots," says Mr. Green, "England saw somewhat of a foreshadowing of national life. Never before had Danish jarls and Welsh princes, the primate of the north and the primate of the south, nobles and theyns from Northumbria and East Anglia, as from Mercia and Wessex, met in a common gathering to give rede and counsel to a common king. As witan [counsellors] from every quarter of the land stood about his throne, men realized how the King of Wessex had risen into the King of England."

For some years Athelstan was left in peace, to strengthen his kingdom at home, and, as we shall see, to make alliances abroad. More than once the Northern Britons rose against him, but it was not till 937 that he had to meet a really formidable attack. In that year Anlaf, son of Guthfrith of Northumbria, appeared off the coast of that province with a fleet of more than six hundred ships which carried a large force of the Irish Danes. Constantine, sub-king of Scotland, whose daughter he had married, Owen of Cumberland, and other British princes, with not a few men of English race, joined him. Athelstan at once marched to meet the invaders, and there followed one of the most famous battles of English history.

William of Malmesbury, following, as has been said, some contemporary record now lost, tells us that on the eve of the battle Anlaf disguised himself as a minstrel, and so found admittance to the King's tent. He sang and played while the King and his nobles were occupied with their meal, and received a piece of money when he was dismissed. This he was too proud to keep, and buried in the earth. A soldier saw the act, and recognized the Danish king, under whom he had formerly served. The man told Athelstan what he had discovered, but not till the false minstrel was safe out of the camp. When Athelstan reproached him for this delay he answered, "The same oath that I have sworn to you I once swore to Anlaf; had I betrayed him, you might well expect that I should betray you. But now, if you will condescend to listen to my advice, change the place of

your tent." The King followed this counsel, and had reason to be glad that he did so. A night attack was made on the camp, and a bishop, who had come in with his attendants, and pitched his tent in the vacant place, was slain; the King escaped himself unhurt.

For a day or two longer Athelstan waited till the forces that he summoned from all parts of his kingdom came up. Then he gave battle to the enemy. The Chronicler tells us that this was the fiercest and bloodiest fight that had been fought since the English people first came to the island of Britain, and he incorporates in his story a poem, probably contemporary, which commemorates the valour of the king and his nobles, and the complete defeat of the enemy. I quote from Professor H. Morley's version some part of this poem, the early date of which may be indicated by the fact that West Saxons and Mercians are so pointedly distinguished.

"This year King Athelstan, the Lord of Earls,
Ring-giver to the warriors, Edmund too,
His brother, won in fight with edge of swords
Life-long renown at Brunanburgh. The sons
Of Edward clave with the forged steel the wall
Of linden shields. The spirit of their sides
Made them defenders of the land, its wealth,
Its homes, in many a fight with many a foe.
Low lay the Scottish foes, and death-doomed fell
The shipmen; the field streamed with warriors' blood,
When rose at morning tide the glorious star,
The sun, God's shining candle, until sank
The noble creature to its setting. There
Lay many a Northern warrior, struck with darts
Shot from above the shield, and scattered wide

As fled the Scots, weary and sick of war,
Forth followed the West Saxons, in war bands
Tracking the hostile folk the livelong day.
With falchions newly ground they hewed amain
Behind the men who fled. The hard hand-play
The Mercians refused to none who came.
Warriors with Olave, o'er the beating waves,
And borne in the ship's bosom, came death-doomed
To battle in that land. There lay five kings
Whom on the battlefield swords put to sleep,
And they were young; and seven of Olave's jarls,
With Scots and mariners an untold host.
Then the Prince of the Northmen fled, compelled
To seek with a small band his vessel's prow.
The bark drove from the shore, the king set sail,
And on the fallow flood preserved his life.
Then fled the hoary chief, old Constantine;
Regaining his north country, not to boast
How falchions met.

Then in their mailed ships on the stormy seas
The Northmen went, the leavings of red darts,
Through the deep water Dublin once again,
Ireland, to seek, abased. Fame-bearing went
Meanwhile to their own land, West Saxon's land,
The brothers, King and Atheling. They left
The carcases behind them to be shared
By livid kite, swart raven, horny-beaked,
And the white eagle, of the goodly plumes,
The greedy war-hawk, and grey forest wolf,
Who ate the carrion."

The English army suffered severely. Among the slain were two of the king's cousins — Alfric and Athelwin. A Scandinavian poem, but of later date, claims a share in the victory for some Danish mercenaries, who were in Athelstan's pay, and who gave him special help by defeating the Scots or Irish. Brunanburgh, the site of the battle, cannot be iden-

tified. It was probably somewhere near the Yorkshire or Lincolnshire coast.

Athelstan's family alliances with foreign princes were remarkable. One of his sisters was married to the son of the German king, Henry the Fowler. This son was afterwards the Emperor Otto the Great. Another, who accompanied the bride to her German home, became the wife of some unknown prince, who possessed a "territory near the Alps." A third sister was married to Hugh, the father of the famous Hugh Capet; and a fourth to a prince who has been called—but, it would seem, with doubtful accuracy—Louis of Aquitaine. The most important of these marriages was that between Hugh and Edhild. William of Malmesbury gives an account of the splendid embassy which accompanied Adulf of Flanders, himself a grandson of Alfred, when he came to demand for his master's son, the hand of the English princess. He brought "gifts such as would satisfy the most boundless avarice, perfumes such as had never before been known in England;" and, among other marvels, the "sword of Constantine the Great," on which the name of its first possessor might still be read in letters of gold; and the spear of Charlemagne, which had brought unfailing victory to the great emperor, whenever he had hurled it against the infidels. It is beyond the scope of this book to disentangle the web of Athelstan's French politics. It must suffice to say that they were directed against the Normans, the kinsmen and allies of the English king's worst enemies at home. He sought to strengthen against them first Hugh, then Louis, surnamed d'Outremer,

his own nephew, whose youth had been spent in his Court. English kings before Athelstan had had relations with foreign princes ; he is the first in whom we can trace a distinct foreign policy.

In the promotion of peace and order at home the King was notably active. There were local courts of justice, parts of the old English life, throughout the kingdom, but they were overridden by the usurpations and violence of powerful nobles. Athelstan set himself to correct this abuse by giving more power to the superior justice which proceeded from himself. "If any be so rich or of such great kindred that he cannot be kept back from robbery or the defence of robbers, let him be taken out of that part of the country, with wife and child, and all his goods, into that part of the kingdom that the King wills." Anticipations of modern Poor Laws are to be found in the provision made for the support of one poor Englishman on every two of the King's farms, and for the redemptions of those whom debt or offence had brought into a state of slavery. The "masterless" men, the "sturdy beggars" of a latter age, the "vagrants," who are so well known to ourselves, were not forgotten. Every man that had neither property nor lord to answer for him had to be placed under a lord. Strong regulations were made against theft, which was to be punished with a severity that long remained a blot on English laws.[1]

Markets and trade generally were put under strict regulation. Attention was also paid to the coinage

[1] As late as 1827 the stealing of goods to the value of a shilling from a dwelling-house was punishable with death or transportation.

of money, which thenceforward was only to be carried on at certain places Another institution of English life, to which Athelstan gave new force, is strange to modern society.[1] This was the "frith-gild," or *peace-club*, as it may be translated. The old custom of "frank pledge" had been one in which a man freely engaged with his neighbour to join with him in working for certain objects that concerned the public good. This grew up, under the encouragement of Athelstan and other kings, into the regular system of "peace-clubs." Every member of them swore to help his associates in all cases of need. They were leagues against violence and fraud, benefit clubs, and burial clubs.[2]

Athelstan survived his great victory at Brunanburgh three years. He died on October 20, 940, and was buried at Malmesbury. His tomb is still to be seen [3] in the splendid Abbey Church, which is all that remains of the great monastery. He was but forty-six years of age. Again and again we find England suffering grievous loss from the early death of some of her ablest kings.

[1] I ought, perhaps, to except "Vigilance Committees," bodies which have been long familiar in some parts of the United States, and which are beginning to be known in England.

[2] On the Continent, where the Roman law, always adverse to voluntary associations, had a firmer hold, these "peace-clubs" were put down with much severity.

[3] The tomb itself is comparatively modern.

XXII.

EDMUND I. AND EDRED.

EDMUND, half-brother of Athelstan, and youngest son of Edward the Elder, was but eighteen years of age when he came to the throne. Nevertheless, three years before he had fought by his brother's side at Brunanburgh. In those days, and indeed for long afterwards, Englishmen of royal and noble race ripened early. It was at fifteen, when a boy is now thought but just old enough for a great school, that Edward the Black Prince won the battle of Creçy.

It was no easy work that the young Edmund had to do. Athelstan had set over Northumbria a Norwegian prince, Eric of the Bloody Axe. "Eric," says Mr. Green, "is one of the few figures who stand out distinct for us from the historic darkness which covers the north."[1] "Stout and comely, strong and very manly, a great and lucky man of war, but evil-minded, gruff, unfriendly, and silent."[2] "He was in name a Christian, but he followed the ways of his heathen countrymen." As he had little land, "he went on a cruise every summer, and plundered in

[1] "Conquest of England," p. 263.

[2] Saga quoted by Mr. Green, *l.c.*

Shetland and the Hebrides." When Athelstan was dead Eric felt himself unsafe. He took to his ships, and set off on another cruise for plunder. The Danes of Northumbria sent for Anlaf, and when he came in 941 broke out into open revolt. They were joined by their kindred in Mercia, and in the following year found a powerful supporter in Wulfstan, Archbishop of York. Anlaf and Wulfstan, for the archbishop seems to have taken the field in person, led the Danish army into the dominions of Edmund. At first the English were worsted, suffering in particular a severe defeat at Tamworth. Then they recovered themselves. Mercia and the Five Boroughs [1] fell into their hands; with Leicester Anlaf and Wulfstan were almost taken prisoners. Then a treaty was concluded, the negotiators being the two archbishops, Wulfstan and Odo, both of them, strangely enough, of Danish, or half Danish, extraction. By this Edmund gave up to Anlaf all the country north of Watling Street. The Danish king was to acknowledge Edmund as his overlord; but this was a matter of form, and, for the time, at least, England was reduced to the dimensions which it had sixty years before.

But the time was short. Anlaf died very soon after the conclusion of the treaty, and his dominions were divided between another Anlaf (son of Sihtric [2]) and Regnault (son of Guthfrith). They enjoyed their power, however, but for a short time. In 944 Edmund drove them both out, and the Dane-law again became part of England.

[1] By this name were known the five towns of Derby, Lincoln, Nottingham, Stamford, and Leicester, which had formed a confederacy in the early days of Alfred's reign. [2] See p. 231.

In the same year the English king still further strengthened his position. The Britons of Strathclyde or Cumbria had been among the foes of Athelstan at Brunanburgh, and they had taken the occasion of Edmund's weakness to plunder the country to the south. It was against them, however, that he turned his arms as soon as the Danes were disposed of. "He harried all Cumbria," and handed it over, when it was conquered, to Malcolm I. of Scotland, son of that Constantine who had barely escaped with his life from the defeat of Brunanburgh. It was a wise act, for Cumbria gave no trouble to the kings of England for many years thereafter.

After a reign of scarcely six years, this young prince, who had shown such signal proofs of ability as a soldier and a statesman, came to a violent end—another instance of the unhappy fate which cut off so many of the best English kings in the very midst of their work. He was keeping the feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury (May 26th) at Pucklechurch, in Gloucestershire, when an outlawed robber, Leofa by name, insolently entered the hall, and took his seat at the King's table. The cupbearer attempted to put him out, and Leofa drew his sword on him. The King rushed to the help of his servant, seized Leofa by the hair, and threw him to the ground; but the robber, as he fell, drew a dagger from his belt, and stabbed Edmund to the heart.

Edmund's sons were but children, and he was succeeded by his brother Edred, another able ruler, but short-lived like the rest of his house. The great event of his reign was what may be called the final

conquest of Northumbria. The Danes of that region made in Edred's second year another effort for independence. They drove out the two princes whom Edmund had established, and put in their place Eric, not their old sub-king, surnamed of the Bloody Axe, but a son of the Danish king, Harold Blue-tooth (Blaatand). In 947 Edred marched against the revolted province, and ravaged it from end to end. It marks a change in the conditions of the long struggle

ANGLO-SAXON CUP.
(*Found at Halton, Lancashire.*)

between English and Danes, that it is no longer the Christian people doing battle with Pagans. One of the chief acts of vengeance, with which Edred punishes the Northumbrians, is to burn to the ground the great Minster of Ripon, while Archbishop Wulfstan is found again among the chiefs and counsellors of the Danish army. The English king

seems to have taken the Northumbrians by surprise, for we do not find that they made any attempt to resist his invasion. But they followed his retreat, and were strong enough to inflict a heavy loss upon his army when they overtook its rear at Chesterford (in Essex). The king was preparing to turn back and avenge this disaster by a fresh ravage of Northumbria, when he was appeased by entreaties for peace, and by large gifts which were to compensate for the lives of the slain.

Three years afterwards Archbishop Wulfstan was arrested, and imprisoned at Jedburgh. Of what followed in Northumbria we know nothing for certain. Snorro Sturleson, the Icelandic chronicler, tells us of a fierce battle between Eric, son of Harold Blue-tooth, and Olaf, who represented the friends of the English rule. The result was the complete defeat of Eric, who fell with five other kings. If this is the true story the Northmen fought among themselves, and the English king had his work done for him. What is certain is that, in 954, Northumbria made its final submission, and was put under the rule of an Englishman, Oswulf of Bernicia, being changed at the same time from a sub-kingdom into an earldom.

In 955 we find Edred styling himself "King of the Anglo-Saxons and Emperor of all Britain." In the same year he died. He had long been in bad health. The biography of Dunstan[1] gives some piteous details of his illness, from which we may gather that he suffered from some painful ailment of the stomach.

[1] This is the first life printed in Dr. Stubbs's "Memorials of Dunstan."

Curiously enough, the late chroniclers speaks of him as worn out with old age. Old he could not have been, for he certainly was not born before 924. He died at Frome, in Somersetshire, on the 23rd of November, before his friend and counsellor Dunstan could reach him. Dunstan was hurrying from Glastonbury with the royal treasures, that the King might "freely dispose of them while he could." Of Dunstan it is now time to speak.

XXIII.

DUNSTAN.

DUNSTAN stands as certainly first among the Churchmen of Early England, as Alfred among its kings. Unhappily, we cannot get as clear an idea of his character. All or nearly all that we are told about Alfred belongs to history. If some tales[1] are mixed with it, these are few and of little importance. The story of Dunstan, on the other hand, is overlaid with legend and fiction. Even the almost contemporary Life, written by "B,"[2] a Saxon priest, and dedicated to Dunstan's successor in the archbishopric of Canterbury abounds with miracles.

These, indeed, need not trouble us very much. It is a more serious matter that Dunstan's life has been made, so to speak, the battle-field of a very bitter controversy. Into the rights and wrongs of this controversy it is impossible to go, but it may be briefly described as the contest between the Regular and the Secular clergy. The Regular clergy were the monks, those who lived according to the rules (*regulae*) of the

[1] The story of the burnt cakes, for instance.

[2] The authorship of this Life is fully discussed by Dr. Stubbs, in his "Memorials of St. Dunstan."

various monastic orders; the Seculars were those who were not bound by such rules, but lived in the world (*seculum*). They were, for the most part, the clergy who served the various parish churches throughout England, though they sometimes held preferments in cathedrals. It was as to the possession of the cathedrals indeed that some of the fiercest disputes occurred. Some bishop, who was strongly attached to the monastic system, would try to turn out the Secular priests, and bring in Regulars into their places. As to the parish priests, there was a great dispute whether or no they should be allowed to marry. Both these matters would cause, it is clear, much angry feeling, and angry feeling tends more than anything else to obscure the truth of history. Dunstan was believed to have been a very vehement champion of the Regulars against the Seculars. Some writers thought that he was right, some thought that he was wrong, according as they favoured this side or that; but they all agreed in exaggerating his actions; the one to show his zeal and energy, the other to prove that he was cruel and tyrannical. It is not difficult, perhaps, for us to be impartial in the matter, but it is very difficult, at so great a distance of time, to discover the truth, hidden as it by the prejudices and interests of writers of the time, or, in any case, much nearer to it than we are.

Dunstan was born in 920, near Glastonbury. He was of noble family. Two of his relatives were bishops; others were attached to the royal household. His brother was "reeve," or steward, of the estates of Glastonbury Abbey. Dunstan was sent to the school

DUNSTAN.

(*From the original MS.*).

attached to the abbey, and made remarkable progress in his studies. It is interesting to hear that his chief teachers were Irishmen, and that he studied with special attention mathematics and arithmetic, and that he became a proficient in music. The harp and the organ are mentioned as the instruments on which he played. When he had reached the proper age he was ordained ;[1] and not long afterwards he became a monk. This latter step he took somewhat unwillingly, and not until he had been warned, as he thought, by an illness. This took place at Winchester. Thence he returned to Glastonbury, and built himself a cell, relieving his studies and meditations with work of the hands, especially with the labours of the forge.[2] At some time during the reign of Edmund, the successor of Athelstan, he was made Abbot of Glastonbury, and added largely to the buildings, while he reformed the discipline of the monastery. When Edred succeeded Edmund on the throne, Dunstan, who had been a fellow-student of the young king, at once took a great part in affairs of State. He

[1] By this is meant that he took the inferior orders ; a priest he did not become till after he had become a monk.

[2] Here comes in the famous story of the devil and the hot iron. William of Malmesbury's account may be thus abridged :—One day, towards evening, the devil looked in his window, as he was busy at his forge, and asked him to do a piece of work for him. Dunstan, who did not imagine who this pleasant-looking stranger really was, readily consented. But when his visitor began to indulge in loose talk, he began to suspect his character. He put his tongs in the furnace, blew it with his bellows into a white heat, and was just in time to catch the jaws of the tempter, who saw that he had been discovered. The Evil One fled, crying out with a voice loud enough to be heard over the whole country : "What has this bald head done?" (A "bald head" because he had the monastic tonsure).

was the chief adviser, or among the chief advisers, of Edred, and must share the credit of his successful policy abroad and at home. He did not, however, give up his position at Glastonbury, and he is said to have refused the offer of the bishopric of Crediton. In this position he remained till Edred's death in 955.

Thenceforward for some time, Dunstan's story and the story of England may be told together.

Edred was succeeded by his nephew Edwy, who, as his father Edmund was not born before 921, could not have been more than fifteen years of age.[1] He had no liking for Dunstan or his policy. The two soon came into violent collision. Edwy wished to marry a certain Elgiva, whose relationship to him was within the prohibited degrees.[2] This was itself a scandal, but the way in which the young king devoted himself to this lady and her mother was far more offensive. Early in 956 the coronation was held. Most of the great nobles and Churchmen were present at it, and Odo, Archbishop of Canterbury, placed the crown on Edwy's head. At the feast which followed, the King made some pretext for withdrawing. As he did not return, and the cause of his long absence was sus-

[1] The very early age at which the English kings married is noticeable. They resembled in this respect the French Merovingians, though they did not degenerate in the same deplorable way.

[2] These degrees extended at the time as far as the *seventh*, *i.e.*, as far as the relationship of *sixth* cousins. People might not marry if they had a common ancestor within *eight* generations, inclusively reckoned. Relationship by marriage was taken into account as well as relationship by blood. And *spiritual* relationship, *i.e.*, the relation of god-father or god-mother, was also considered to be a bar, but not to the same extent. It was possible, however, to obtain dispensations by which such marriages were allowed.

pected, Odo and the other nobles sent Dunstan and a kinsman to fetch him. They found him with Elgiva and her mother, the crown lying on the ground beside him, and compelled him to return to the banquet.

It must not be supposed that the personal offence given by Dunstan's conduct was the only, or, indeed, the chief, cause of what followed. Some great question of government was at stake. Doubtless this concerned the relation of the smaller states to the leading kingdom, Wessex. It has been stated thus—that Dunstan "aimed at the unity of England under the West Saxon king, but giving home rule to each state"; that "this policy was disliked by the West Saxon nobility, who regarded the vassal kingdoms as their own prey, and desired to make each state a dependency of Wessex."[1] Whatever the cause, Dunstan fell. The opposite faction, which was headed by some of the King's near kinsmen and by the mother of Elgiva, triumphed. Edgiva, widow of Edward the Elder, and mother of Edred, was stripped of her property, and Dunstan withdrew to Flanders, not without running some danger of his life on the way. At the close of this same year Athelstan, Alderman of East Anglia, who had shared the counsels of Dunstan and Edgiva, retired into a monastery.

In 957 Edwy married Elgiva. The marriage was at least one of the causes which led to quarrel between the King's new counsellors. Some of them retired

[1] "Dictionary of English History": article, "Dunstan." Just at this point the able guidance of Mr. Green fails us. We are warned that the chapter on "The Great Ealdormen," does not represent his matured conclusions.

from the Court, and set up Edgar, the King's younger brother, as King of Mercia and Northumbria.[1] Edgar recalled Dunstan, and towards the end of the same year Archbishop Odo, after pronouncing the marriage of Edwy and Elgiva to be void, came over to the new king.

Of Edwy nothing remains to be said, except that he died in the following year. The Saxon Chronicler, our most trustworthy authority, simply says: "In this year, the 1st of October, died King Edwy." Later writers speak of his having been murdered, or, at least, punished by some violent and unhappy death.[2] The biographer of Dunstan, mentioned above, has the phrase, "breathed his last breath in an unhappy death." We need not put much weight on these words, for the writer would hardly have supposed that a persecutor of Dunstan could have a happy end.

Edwy was succeeded on the throne by his younger brother and rival, Edgar, who "became King," says the Chronicler, "in Wessex, and in Mercia also, and in Northumbria. In his days all things went exceeding well, and God granted to him that he should have peace so long as he lived. . . . And he loved the law of God, and took thought for the peace of his people beyond all the kings that had been before him within

[1] He seems to have been already sub-king of the first of these two provinces.

[2] The fate of Elgiva is not known. The stories of how Odo dragged her from the arms of her husband, caused to be branded on the face with a hot iron, and banished her to Ireland; how she returned, with her beauty restored, to fall again into the hands of her enemies, and to be cruelly tortured by them, do not rest on good authority.

the memory of man. And God was with him, so that the kings and nobles diligently obeyed him, and did according to his pleasure; and he ruled all things without force of arms as it seemed good to him." This description of Edgar's reign agrees with the title that has been given him of "Edgar the Peaceable," and, perhaps we may add, with the fact, that the Chronicles have little to say about this time. England was enjoying something of the happiness of a nation that has no history.

Of Danish invasions we hear nothing during the sixteen years of Edgar's reign (959–975). Indeed, the King himself attacked them, making, we are told, an expedition against the Danes of Ireland, and taking from them, at least for a time, the town of Dublin. The Chronicler accuses him of showing too much favour to this people: "One exceeding great evil did he, that he loved the misdoings of foreigners, and established pagan customs in the land, inviting strangers hither, and bringing to his kingdom harmful peoples." We do not know enough of the history of the time to be able to understand at all exactly the meaning of this accusation. Perhaps it may be connected with Edgar's personal character,[1] and with

[1] We need not credit, much less relate, all the stories that later writers told to the King's advantage. Some were, doubtless, fictions; others exaggerated. But there must have been some foundation for them. One may be briefly related, the tale of Elfreda, daughter of the Alderman of Devonshire. The report of this lady's beauty had reached the King, and he sent a friend, Athelwold, son of Athelstan of East Anglia, to see whether it was equalled by the reality. The messenger himself fell wildly in love with the beauty, courted and won her for himself, representing to the King that her charms had been greatly exaggerated. But, as time went on, some report of the truth reached Edgar's ears, and

favourites of Danish race whom he placed in his Court. That he was a prince of violent temper and, for some time at least, of lawless habits, seems beyond doubt, and he may have offended the public opinion of his time by the choice of pagan companions.

The foreign politics of Edgar's reign were chiefly concerned with the Welsh kingdoms. Idwal of North Wales refused the tribute which had been imposed upon his people by Athelstan, and regularly paid from that time. Edgar invaded and ravaged his territory. Idwal fell in battle, and the Welsh submitted. The tribute, it is said, was thenceforward commuted for an annual payment of three hundred wolves' heads. The effect was all that could be wished, for in the fourth year the number of heads could no longer be collected. Another expedition into Cumberland is also mentioned.

The chief of the means by which Edgar protected his kingdom from invasion and reduced insubordinate tributaries to obedience was his fleet. The number of ships which he is said to have equipped [1] is beyond all belief; but we may be sure that it was a strong and well-ordered force. Every year, after Easter, the King held what we should call a naval review. He made a circuit of the coasts of England, and inspected

he announced to Athelwold his intention to pay him a visit. The unhappy man was thus compelled to tell his wife what he had done, and to beg her to disguise her beauty as much as she could. Elgiva, angry that she had missed the chance of being a Queen, did exactly the opposite, using every means to heighten her charms. The King paid his visit, saw the deceit that had been practised upon him, and avenged it by murdering his friend with his own hand. Afterwards he married the widow, who bore him Ethelred. His disastrous reign will be the subject of the next chapter.

[1] Three thousand six hundred!

EDGAR.

(*From the original MS.*).

the various squadrons which guarded them. It was after one of these expeditions that he received from the Celtic princes of the West a remarkable token of their homage. The sub-kings of Scotland, Cumbria, Mar, and the Hebrides, Strathclyde, Wales, and Westmoreland met him at Chester, and rowed him in a barge, which Edgar himself steered, to the monastery of St. John the Baptist. There they joined in worship, and thence they returned in the same fashion to the palace of Chester.

Edgar did much during his reign for the internal order of his kingdom. He looked himself into the administration of justice by the aldermen, and punished their delinquencies [1] severely. Assizes, as we may call them, were to be held for every borough three times, and for every shire twice in the year. The coinage was carefully looked to, and the money, which had suffered much in previous reigns from clipping, kept up to a proper standard. Attention also was given to weights and measures. There are proofs that domestic trade, and probably foreign commerce, greatly increased during the "golden days" of Edgar the Peaceable.

Much of whatever credit is due for this prosperity belongs, it cannot be doubted, to Dunstan, who continued to be the King's Prime Minister throughout his reign. He became Bishop of Worcester and London successively, and, shortly after the death of Odo, Archbishop of Canterbury. Elfsin of Win-

[1] He is said to have ravaged the Isle of Thanet because the inhabitants of that district had plundered and imprisoned some traders from York.

chester was indeed appointed to succeed him (Odo died before the accession of Edgar), but Elfsin died of cold, or, as another account has it, was killed by an avalanche, on his journey to Rome.[1] Another successor was selected, but he was manifestly unfit for so important a post, and hastened, or was compelled, to resign. Dunstan was chosen, in the year following the accession of Edward, and held the see for twenty-eight years. It seems to have been vacant for two.

In 975 King Edgar died. He was in the thirty-second or thirty-third year of his age.

[1] Archbishops had to receive from the Pope a pall (*pallium*), which was the token o their authority over their suffragan bishops. They commonly went to Rome to be invested with this by the Pope in person, but it was sometimes sent to them. The pall seems to have been first given by a Pope early in the sixth century. Its importance as a sign of the growing Papal authority is evident.

XXIV.

EDWARD (THE MARTYR) AND ETHELRED THE UNREADY.

EDGAR left two sons, Edward and Ethelred. The former was thirteen, the latter seven years of age. There was no older prince of the House of Alfred who could be called to the throne, and between two children the choice seemed, at least to some of the nobles, to be open. Elgiva, the mother of Ethelred, claimed the crown for her son, on what pretext it is not easy to understand,[1] and found some supporters. But Dunstan was too powerful for her. He presented the young Edward to the assembly, and gave him the royal consecration on the spot, being joined in the act by his fellow-primate the Archbishop of York.

The politics of Edward's short reign are extremely obscure. The Chroniclers of later times speak as if the chief question in dispute was whether the dignities of the Church should be held by monks or seculars.

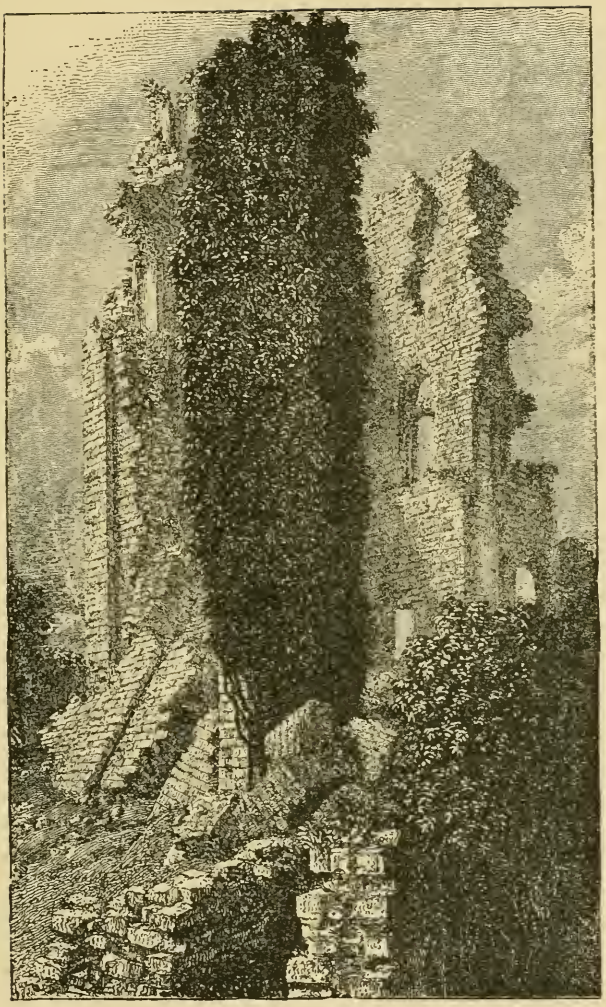
[1] It is said on the ground that Edgar was not crowned when Edward was born. But neither was he crowned, as far as we know, till five years after the birth of Ethelred. The only coronation of Edgar that is recorded took place in 973. Possibly Edward's mother never received the title of Queen.

But even if this view be accepted we are still in the dark. One of the undoubted facts of the period is that "Oslac the great Earl of Northumbria was banished," and another that "Elfhere commanded that many monasteries should be destroyed which King Edgar had before commanded the holy bishop Athelwold to restore." But Oslac's banishment is lamented by the monkish chroniclers. He was the friend of the Orders. And if Dunstan was in power, why was it that Oslac and not Elfhere was banished? It has been suggested [1] that the real question in dispute was the relation between the King and the nobles, and that Dunstan, whose devotion to the monastic cause has been greatly exaggerated, ranged himself on the side of the King.

In 976 there was a great famine throughout England. Two years afterwards "all the nobles of England, assembled in council at Calne, fell from a certain chamber, save only the holy Archbishop Dunstan, who planted his feet upon a beam. Some were grievously wounded, and others did not even escape alive."

In this year Edward was murdered. That the deed was done at Corfe Castle in Dorsetshire, and by the instigation of his step-mother Elfrida, may be taken as a certainty. Later writers add that he had been hunting in the neighbourhood, that left alone by his attendants and wearied by the chase, he made his way to his step-mother's palace, that she met him at the door and presented him with a cup of wine, and that while he was drinking an assassin plunged a

[1] "Conquest of England," p. 352.



CORFE CASTLE.

(*The King's Tower—Saxon Work.*)

dagger into his body. When he felt the blow the young King set spurs to his horse, but, weakened by loss of blood, fell from his saddle, and was dragged along till he died. His body was buried without any ceremony at Wareham, but was translated in the following year by Elfhere and Dunstan to Shaftesbury, and re-interred with royal honours. Pity for his untimely fate gave him the title of Martyr, and the festival of the translation of his bones retains its place in the Calendar of the English Church.

Ethelred was crowned at Kingston in May, 979. He was then in his eleventh year. Little is told us of the early years of his reign, but enough to show us that the old troubles were coming back. The incursions of the pirates, from which England had been almost entirely free, for many years began again. They were rendered restless at home by the growing strength of the royal power, and by the conflict between Christianity and their old faith, while they soon found out that England was less vigorously governed and protected than it had been for many generations. The great fleet which Edgar had raised for the defence of the coasts had disappeared. As early as the second year of Ethelred's reign we hear of places so widely apart as Kent, Southampton, and Chester being ravaged by the pirates. Then there were troubles and strife at home. London, always the richest, if not the most politically important, city of the kingdom was burnt to the ground. "A great murrain of cattle happened for the first time in the English nation." Elfric, ruler of Mercia, was banished, and the King, for some reason which is not known to

us, laid siege to Rochester, and unable to take the town, ravaged the lands of the bishopric. And then in 988 [1] the great Dunstan died. He had been present at the coronation of Ethelred, probably had himself performed it. William of Malmesbury records the prophecy which he is said to have uttered on that occasion: "The sin of thy mother and of the men that conspired with her in her wicked deed shall not be washed out but with the blood of many; and there shall come upon the English people such evils as it has not suffered from the day that it came hither until now!" From that time the great Archbishop had little or no part in affairs of state, though he is said to have bought off the King from his attack on Rochester by the present of a hundred pounds, and to have expressed his contempt for his meanness in taking it. He occupied himself with the care of his diocese and his province, and what time these and his private devotions left him he gave to study. On Ascension Day, May 17th, he preached three times, and entertained his guests with his customary cheerfulness. Two days afterwards he died, "a man," says his biographer, "not of very advanced years, but of boundless sanctity, whose virtues exceeded all reports of them, and who postponed till his own departure the ruin that had long since been threatening his country."

This danger was indeed more formidable than the piratical descents which had troubled the early years of Ethelred's reign. It was nothing less than the conquest of the whole kingdom. The rest of Ethel-

[1] Dunstan's name is still kept in the Anglican Calendar.

red's reign, nearly thirty years, was spent in vain attempts to keep off these terrible foes from the North. Bribery, battle, massacre were all tried in turn, and all failed.

The great leader of the Danes in this struggle was Swegen, commonly known as Sweyn, son of Harald Blue-tooth. Sweyn, who had been baptized, but had thrown off his Christianity, represented the old heathen party. In this character he had waged war with his father, and this was one of the causes why, after a very brief occupation of the throne on Harald's death in 986, he was driven into exile. A Danish exile took, of course, to piracy, and the raids which had ceased for a time during Sweyn's struggle with his father and brief tenure of his kingdom, began again in a worse form than ever. In the very year of Dunstan's death, "Goda, Thane of Devonshire, was slain, and with him there was made a great slaughter."

But it was three years afterwards that there happened one of the most famous and disastrous battles that ever has been fought on English soil. Sweyn himself was not present; the leaders of the Northmen being Justin and Guthmund, lieutenants of Olaf Tryggvason, King of Norway, and possibly Olaf himself. It is not certain where the invaders landed, but it must have been somewhere on the eastern or south-eastern coast. Anyhow we hear of Staines,[1] Sandwich, and Ipswich, as being places which they harried. But it was at Maldon in Essex that they met the English forces, led by Brithnoth, Alderman

[1] If the "Stane" of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle be Staines.

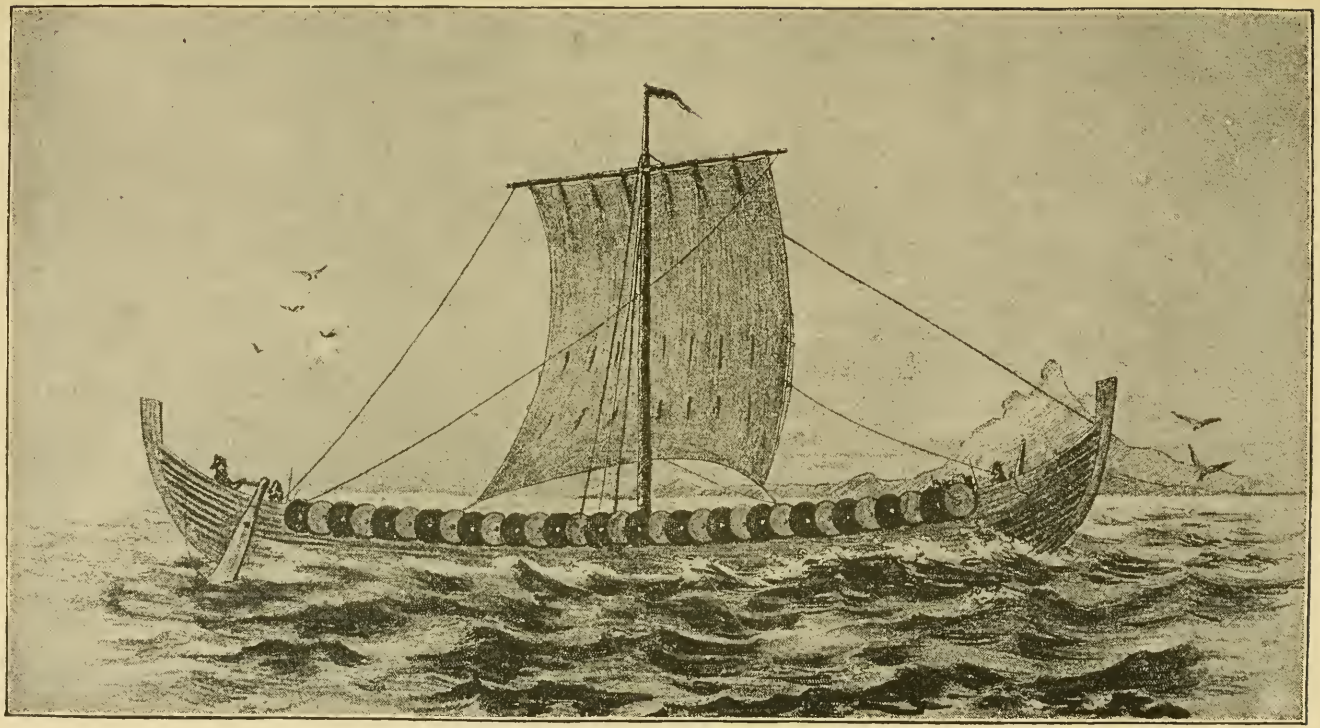
of East Anglia. The Danish ships had sailed up the estuary of the Blackwater, and lay in a creek near the town. The invaders occupied the space between this creek and another which is a little further off from Maldon. On the further side of this latter stream were ranged the Englishmen under Brithnoth. The first struggle was for the bridge which spanned it. It was held, and held successfully, by three champions, whose names the poet who tells the story of the great fight gives as Wulfstan, Elfhere, and Maccus. But when the tide in the creek had ebbed the bridge ceased to be an important post. The water was shallow enough to be forded, and the English chief permitted, or, perhaps, could not prevent the crossing of a large body of the invaders. The English stood to receive them, in a close line, with their shields locked together. Each army sent a flight of javelins at each other, and then closed in deadly conflict with the broad sword. The Alderman, wounded early in the battle, fought on till he died, not failing to sell his life dearly. The struggle went on over his corpse; till a panic fell on the English line, and the Danes were able to carry off the dead hero. But it was recovered from their hands, whether by their own action in doing honour to so brave a foe, or by a sally of the English, we cannot say. Anyhow it was buried in the great church of Ely with all the honours that the abbot and his monks could pay.

The victory at Maldon rested with the Danes, but if there had been many English leaders such as Brithnoth, it would have been like the victories over the Romans which cost Pyrrhus so dear. Unhappily such

were not to be found, or they had not the ear of the king. Instead of readily resisting, Ethelred and his counsellors, among whom was Sigeric, an unworthy successor of Dunstan, preferred the cowardly and foolish policy of buying off the invaders. Olaf and his two lieutenants received a sum of ten thousand pounds. They promised in return to help the English king against any other invaders, and to keep the peace themselves.

The second condition they seem very soon to have broken. The next year we find the English king assembling a great fleet at London to attack the Northmen. And we find also for the first time treachery in the English councils. Elfric, Alderman of Wiltshire, who was joined in command of the English ships with another great noble and with two bishops, sent secret word to the Northmen that their fleet would be surrounded. On the eve of the attack he himself deserted to the enemy, and escaped with them. The English fleet could not capture more than a single ship; but it afterwards met and vanquished the Danes at sea. On this occasion Elfgar, son of Elfric, was taken prisoner, and was blinded by order of Ethelred. The Danes sailed northwards, ravaged the coasts of Lincolnshire and Northumbria, and defeated the forces which were assembled to meet them. Here, again, treachery was at work. The three leaders of the English left the field. They had this excuse, which cannot be made for Elfric, that they were of Danish descent.

In 994 a formidable force sailed up the Thames to London. It consisted of ninety-four ships, and was



VIKING SHIP.

commanded by Sweyn of Denmark and Olaf of Norway. The Northmen attacked the city, and were beaten back by the citizens, who showed their valour not for the first or the last time in their history. The invaders "suffered," says the Chronicler, "more loss and damage than they had thought that any men could inflict upon them." They revenged themselves by cruelly ravaging all the region of East Anglia, Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire. Ethelred did not attempt to imitate the valour of the Londoners, but went back to the miserable policy of Maldon, and bought off the enemy. This time, indeed, a more sagacious course was followed, and the enemy was divided against himself. The king's offers were made to Olaf of Norway; he received sixteen thousand pounds, and, after taking hostages to secure his safe return, was conducted to Ethelred, at Andover. There he was received with great honour, and underwent the rite of confirmation at the hands of the Bishop of Winchester, the English king standing sponsor for him. He made a promise that he would never again visit England as an enemy, and this promise he kept. Indeed he never returned at all; but served his new friends by waging war with the King of Denmark. It was in a sea-fight with him that he died six years afterwards (A.D. 1000).

XXV.

ETHELRED AND SWEYN.

For two years after the treaty with Olaf England had rest from the Northmen. It is significant of the feeling of security that this breathing space seemed to give, that now at last the long wanderings of the relics of Cuthbert of Lindisfarne came to an end. Their first resting-place had been in the monastery of Lindisfarne. Thence they had been removed at the rumour of the Danish invasion of 875. After eight years of wandering, during which it was at one time intended to transport them to Ireland, they found in 883 what seemed a permanent abode at Chester-le-Street, five miles north of the present city of Durham. At Chester-le-Street they remained for more than a hundred years. Again the terror of the Danes drove them forth. This time they wandered as far south as Ripon in Yorkshire. Thence again, when peace seemed assured, they set out for their old home at Chester But the bishop and his monks were attracted on their road by the charms of the site at Durham. At Durham they remained, and remain to

this day. The hope of peace was disappointed, but that it was strong at the time is proved by the action of the guardians of the relics. It was still some years before the great Sweyn was to reappear. He was busy at home. But the incursions of the Northmen began again in 997. In that and the two following years they are reported as having ravaged the south and west coasts of England. Cornwall, Wales, Devonshire, Dorsetshire, the Isle of Wight, Sussex, and Kent, are mentioned among the places which suffered from them. It was the plunder of these last districts that seems to have stirred up the King and his counsellors to action; but it was action that did more harm than good. After telling us that the Danes, when they had routed the men of Kent, took to themselves horses, and rode whithersoever they would, and laid waste the whole western part of Kent, the Chronicler goes on: "Then it was ordered by the King and his nobles that an army should be gathered together both by sea and land. But when the ships had been got ready, they delayed from day to day, and the unhappy people that manned the ships were sore distressed. And if ever the fleet was about to sail forth, it was always hindered from one time to another, and meanwhile the strength of the enemy increased. For only when the Pagans retreated from the sea coast, then would the fleet go forth. So to the end the fleet served no good purpose, but did only trouble the people, and bring about the losing of much money, and encourage the enemy."

Still the King's fleet and army were not wholly idle.

Though they could not or did not hinder the ravages of the Danes, they were used against the Celtic kingdom of Cumberland, which for the last fifty years had been subordinate to Scotland. In 1000 A.D., Ethelred "marched into Cumberland, and laid nearly all the whole land waste; and his fleet sailing from Chester sought to meet him, but could not for the winds. Therefore they laid waste the island of Man." [1] What Cumberland and Man had done to bring down upon them the anger of the English king is not clear. As to Man, according to one account, it had been harried by Sweyn on his last visit to these islands. But, if this be true, it only makes the matter more obscure. Cumberland is said to have refused the Danegelt, or contribution for preparations against the Danes, or, as was more commonly the case, buying them off. As its sub-king owed whatever tribute to be paid to an overlord in Scotland, he was right in refusing this claim. But it would be rash to say certainly that it was ever made. The Saxon Chronicler simply relates the facts of the expedition.

Still more obscure is a story told of an invasion of Normandy by Ethelred's army in the same year, very near the end of the century. Why it went there, and what it was expected to do, cannot be guessed, except we suppose that the English rulers thought it well to aim a blow at the Northmen through their kinsmen settled in France. The expedition ended in disaster, and even disgrace, though we need not believe the

[1] "Man" may possibly mean Anglesea. The name of *Mona* was applied by the Romans to both islands.

story that the English warriors were struck down by the Norman women. As for the Danes, they came back in the following year in greater force than ever. The Chronicler tells how there were stirred up great troubles throughout the land by the fleet of the Pagans, who ravaged everywhere, and burned houses with fire; how they fought at Alton with the men of Hampshire and defeated them, slaying many nobles, though not without great loss of their own; how they marched from Alton westward into Devonshire, and were joined by a certain Pallig, to whom the King had given much land and gold and silver, but who nevertheless revolted against him. Then we hear of Teinton[1] and more houses than the Chronicler can tell of being burnt. Then comes a treaty, which seems of little avail, for the Pagans march into Somersetshire, and there defeat an English army. Finally, they go eastward again to the Isle of Wight, and make another treaty, which, as the season for fighting was probably coming to an end, they consent to keep.

In the next year (1002) comes a crisis in the conflict. "In this year," says the Chronicler, "it was decreed by the King and the nobles that a tribute should be paid to the fleet [of the Danes], and that peace should be made with the Pagans on the condition that they should cease from their misdoings. Then the King sent Leofig, who, according to the words of the King and the nobles, made peace with them, on condition that they should receive money

[1] Possibly Teignmouth.

SAXON PENNIES.

No. 1. Egbert. No. 2. Ethelwulf. No. 3. Ethelbald. No. 4. Æthelbright.
5. Ethelred. 6. Alfred. 7. Eadward I. 8. Ethelstan.
9. Edmund. 10. Edred. 11. Edwy. 12. Eadgar.
No. 13. Eadward II. No. 14. Ethelred the Unready.

and food. To this they consented, and there were paid to them twenty-four thousand pounds." [1]

"In the Lent of this same year came the daughter of Duke Richard, Emma, into this land." Ethelred's first wife Elgiva was dead, and he found a second in the daughter of the Norman Duke Richard, Emma the "Jewel" "(Gemma) Normannorum." He is said to have gone to court her in person. She is reported to have been as beautiful as Helen of Troy, and her coming was as fatal, if not to the nation to which she came, yet certainly to the house into which she married. She was the first of the Norman invaders, and, by her influence, exercised in the first instance through her two husbands [2] and her son, she paved the way for the host which was to conquer England some sixty years later.

Ethelred now ventured on one of those great crimes which, however successful they may seem for the time, surely bring down a fearful punishment on those who commit them.[3] He ordered

[1] The money raised, either to furnish resistance to the invaders or to purchase their forbearance, was called "Dane-money" (Danegelt). It seems to have been a tax of two shillings on every hide (or 120 acres) of cultivated ground. The name is commonly said to have been first given in 991 (see p. 264). The tax remained, as taxes often do, long after the first occasion for it had passed away. William the Conqueror revived it in 1083, and it was not finally abolished till the reign of Henry II. It appears to have been one of the matters in dispute between that King and Thomas à Becket.

[2] After Ethelred's death she married Canute. Her son was Edward the Confessor.

[3] We may compare the fate of Mithradates, who in 88 B.C. ordered the massacre of all the Roman citizens then residing in Asia, and the disastrous results of the Sicilian vespers (A.D. 1282), when all the French in Sicily were simultaneously murdered.

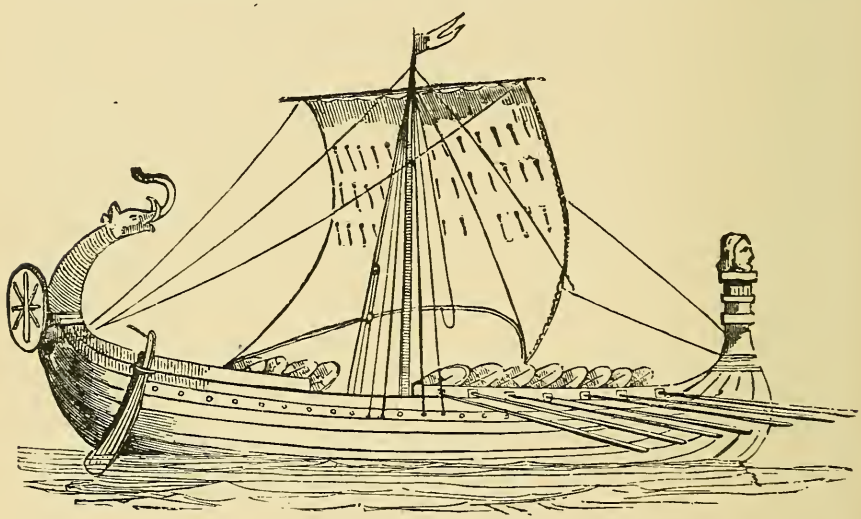
that all the Danes throughout England should be murdered, and his orders were carried out on St. Brice's day, November 13th.

It is very likely that Ethelred ventured on this summary way of ridding himself of his enemies on the strength of his alliance with the ruler of Normandy. It is certain that he must have had the feeling of his people with him, for otherwise his orders would not have been carried out so thoroughly as they seem to have been. The English must have been terribly irritated against the strangers. They were heathens ; they had burnt the churches and monasteries, and carried fire and sword and ravage everywhere. Probably they behaved with insolence, even when they were not acting as enemies. The Chroniclers of later times speak of the jealousy of the English against the foreigners, who pleased the native women by their smart dress and cleanly habits.[1] One great provocation there certainly was in the heavy tax for which their presence had given occasion. Fifty thousand pounds had been paid to them in the course of eleven years, a bribe for a forbearance which after all they did not show ; and fifty thousand pounds, which would be a very large sum if put into money of our time, must have been an oppressive burden on a nation that may be said to have had very little trade or manufactures.

It may be supposed that the King did not want a pretext for his act. He had had information, he declared, that the Danes had made a plot to slay

[1] It was especially alleged against the Danes that they indulged in the strange habit of bathing.

him and all his nobles, so that they might take possession of his kingdom without any man resisting. We have no means of judging whether there was any truth in the charge. The number of victims is not known. Later writers embellished their accounts of the massacre with the description of horrible cruelties practised on women and children—women, for the most part, whom the Danes had taken to wife, and children who had been born of these marriages. The



DANISH WAR VESSEL.

original authority simply says: "This year the King ordered that all the Danes who were in England should be slain."

One woman, indeed, seems to have perished in the massacre, and this one brought about a speedy punishment of the crime. Gunhild, sister of King Sweyn of Denmark, had married the Pallig whose treachery to the King has been mentioned earlier in the chapter. She was now killed, declaring, it is

said, with her last breath, that her death would bring many wars upon England. The prophecy was soon fulfilled, for in the very next year Sweyn himself came back, declaring that he would revenge his sister and his countrymen.

XXVI.

THE VENGEANCE FOR ST. BRICE'S DAY.

SWEYN was now the most powerful prince of the kingdoms of the Northmen. Olaf Tryggvason, first his ally and then his enemy, had perished three years before in battle with him, and he seems to have formed plans of conquest such as had not seemed possible to any of those who had gone before him. They had been content, first with the plunder of England, and then with a goodly share of its land. He resolved to be its king.

The murder of his sister gave him, as has been said, a good pretext for action. His first landing was near Exeter. And here we have the earliest of the disasters that were to come from the Norman connections of the new Queen of England. "In this year Exeter was taken by the neglect of the Norman Count Hugh, whom the Queen had made reeve of it; and the Pagans utterly destroyed it, and carried away much booty." If Queen Emma was to blame for putting this unworthy favourite in a post that he was unfit to fill, it must have been the King that put the traitor Elfric [1] in command of the English

[1] See p. 264.

army. "There was gathered together an exceeding great army out of Wiltshire and Hampshire, and it marched against the Pagans with great singleness of heart. But Elfric, who should have led it, showed his ancient craft. For when the armies were now near together, so that they could see each other, Elfric made a pretence that he was sick, vomiting and saying that he suffered from some disease. Thus did he betray the people whom he should have led." The result was that no battle was fought, and that Sweyn was left to ravage Wiltshire as he pleased.

The next year we find him on the other side of England, burning Norwich. But this time he was not to escape so easily. Ulfkytel, the East Anglian Alderman, finding himself unprepared, perhaps overborne by the nobles with whom he took counsel, resolved to follow the fatal example which had already been set so often, "to give the money to the army of the Pagans, and so make peace with them, before the land suffered worse damage. The Danes took the bribe, and, as usual, broke their promise." They marched southwards to Thetford, stopped in the town one night, plundered and burnt it. "But as they were returning to their ships, Ulfkytel came upon them with his forces. Then did they fight a fierce battle, and a great slaughter was made on both sides. Many nobles of the East Angles were slain. But if the whole army of the English had been there, the Pagans had never returned to their ships; and so they themselves declared." As it was, Sweyn remained for the winter in England.

The next year (1005) was a year of peace. At least we hear of no Danish ravages. Sweyn's fleet went back to Denmark, driven away, it is possible, by the famine, so terrible that none remembered the like, that there was throughout England. Shortly after the midsummer of 1006 it returned, making for the port of Sandwich. "And the Pagans did as they were wont, for they plundered, and burnt, and slew all that came in their way." These ravages stirred up King Ethelred to levy an army against them; but the army, says the Chronicler, "was of as little profit as it had been many times before." In the late autumn the Danes made their way, unmolested and with all their booty, to their winter quarters in the Isle of Wight. Finding their stores run short, they crossed to the mainland about Christmas time, and ravaged Hampshire and Berkshire, till they reached the Thames at Reading Marching up the valley of the river they came to Wallingford and utterly destroyed it. From Wallingford they turned westward to Wantage and Farnborough. Near Farnborough rises the range of the Illsley Downs. To one of the heights, now called Cuckamsley Hill, there attached the prophecy that the Danes who should climb it should never see the sea again. The invaders ventured to defy it, and escaped unhurt. They climbed the height, and then turned homewards through East Wiltshire. At Marlborough they were intercepted by an English army. It fared as ill as English armies commonly did in this most unlucky reign. "It was straightway put to flight, and the Pagans carried off their booty to the sea."

The Chronicler is particularly contemptuous of the behaviour of the men of Winchester, whom he calls "a cowardly and dishonourable herd." Ethelred, meanwhile, was keeping Christmas in Shropshire at a safe distance from the scene of war. Something, however, had to be done; county after county of Wessex itself was being ravaged by the invaders, and even the remote Shropshire would not long be safe. Nothing better could be thought of by the King "lacking of council"[1] and his nobles after frequent consultations than the old device, so often tried in vain before, of buying off the enemy. "The King and his nobles resolved that for the benefit of the whole realm, they should pay tribute to the Pagans, though indeed they did it most unwillingly." Another treaty was made. The money had to be raised. Till this was done the Danes were fed. Early in the next year the ransom was ready, thirty thousand pounds, according to some accounts thirty-six thousand. The money seems to have purchased a short respite. For that year and the two that followed it we hear no more of the Danes.

The only entry which the Chronicler makes under the year 1007, besides the payment of the tribute, is that "Edric was made Alderman of Mercia," adding nothing about him good or bad. But Edric was a notable person, and one who seems to have done much mischief. Many thought that he was the suggester of the massacre of St. Brice's day. Florence of Worcester speaks of him as "a man of humble birth, whose tongue had won for him riches and rank, of

[1] This is the meaning of "Unready."

great craft and persuasive eloquence, who surpassed all the men of his time in jealousy of others and treachery, and no less in pride and cruelty." According to the pithy words of another chronicler [1] he was made by the overruling of God for the ruin of the English chief of Mercia. He seems to have married one of Ethelred's daughters, at or about the date of his elevation to the Aldermanship, and was for some time to come a thoroughly bad influence in the councils of the kingdom.

In 1008 a serious effort was made to make provision for the safety of England during the interval of peace. "The King commanded that ships should be made with all speed throughout the land of England." One ship of war was to be furnished by every three hundred and ten hides of land. Every eight hides were to supply in addition a helmet and a breastplate. The fleet was built, but it proved as useless as all the other attempts of the Unready King. There were, indeed, more ships than had ever before been seen in England in the days of any king; and they must have made a goodly show when they were assembled at Sandwich to guard the coast against the heathen invaders. But they did absolutely nothing. One Britric, a brother of the favourite Edric, accused to the King a certain Wulfnoth,[2] who held some office of trust in Sussex. Wulfnoth fled and took some twenty ships with him. Naturally he had no other means of supporting himself and his followers besides piracy,

[1] Henry of Huntingdon.

[2] Wulfnoth is described by the Chronicler as the "father of Count Godwin," a person of whom, and of whose family, we shall hear much hereafter.

and to this he seems to have taken at once, "plundering all the south coast, and doing much damage." Britric pursued him with eighty ships, hoping to take him dead or alive. But a storm, "such as had never been known," drove the ships ashore, and Wulfnoth, who seems to have been safe in harbour while it raged, came upon them and burnt them. For what followed it is impossible to account. One might think that there was an evil spell over everything that Ethelred undertook. "The King returned home with his nobles and chiefs, leaving for so light a cause his ships and people; and the men that were in the ships rowed them to London. So they suffered all the labour of the nation to be so speedily wasted, nor was the terror of the land in any ways diminished."

Of course the Danes were as ready to seize the opportunity as Ethelred was unready. No sooner was the English fleet dispersed than they came with ships without number to Sandwich. Canterbury purchased safety, probably with some of the wealth of St. Augustine's foundation; and the men of East Kent gave three thousand pounds to get rid of the enemy. They sailed westward, and landing on the Hampshire coast, plundered and burnt that county and Berkshire. The King raised an army and cut off their retreat. But Edric did what Elfin had done ten years before. "All the people were ready to attack them, but Edric hindered them, as he ever did."

Late in the autumn the Danes settled in winter quarters near the mouth of the Thames. They

found supplies in the neighbouring districts. London was more than once attacked by them, but always without success. "There," says the Chronicler, "they were always ill received." With the beginning of the year they moved out of their quarters, marched past London, and ravaged the whole valley of the Thames as far as Oxford (which town they burnt). An army had been collected at London to intercept their return, but they avoided it by leaving the Thames at Staines, marching southward through Surrey, and so got back with their plunder to their ships in Kent.

The next year (1010) was one of continuous disaster, but it at least began with a gallant attempt at resistance. The Danes landed near Ipswich, and found Ulfkytel, the hero of the victory of six years before, waiting for them. "The East Anglians straightway fled, but the men of Cambridge bravely stood their ground." A long list of English nobles, headed by one Athelstan, son-in-law to the King, follows, as having been slain in the fight. Then follows the important fact: "The flight was begun by Thurkytel" The name indicates Danish descent; and this may have had something to do with the man's treachery; but Ulfkytel, too, must have been an Anglo-Dane; so that men of the mixed blood could be faithful to the land of their birth. After this defeat all resistance ceased. "The Pagans possessed all East Anglia, and ravaged it for the space of three months. They went into the far country, and slew both men and cattle. And they burnt both Thetford and Cambridge." Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Bedford-

shire were ravaged, and all, it would seem, without any effort to resist. The Chronicler is very sarcastic on the futility of the English rulers: "When the Pagans were in the east, then the King's forces were kept in the west; and when they were in the southern region, our armies were in the northern." At last a council was called, but for all the good it did, it might never have been held. All spirit seems to have been driven out of the men who should have stood forth to defend their country. "No governor was willing to gather his men together; neither did any county help another."

In 1011 we have another return to the miserable system of buying off the enemy. And even this wretched plan, the Chronicler complains, was always resorted to too late. It was after they had ravaged, not before, everything that the money was offered to them. Things, indeed, were in a desperate state. A dismal list is given of the regions which the invaders held in undisputed possession. They had East Anglia and Essex and Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and half of Huntingdonshire. On the south side of the Thames they had all Kent and Sussex, and Surrey and Berkshire, and a great part of Wiltshire. And now happened one of the great tragedies that have made their mark on the hearts of Englishmen.

In the late summer the Danes approached Canterbury. It was either too poor to purchase their forbearance, as it had done three years before, or the Archbishop Alphage, a man of resolute temper, was unwilling to submit again to such a disgrace. Any-

how, the gates were closed, and the city prepared to stand a siege. But treachery was at work here as elsewhere. This time it was an ecclesiastic, one Elfmer, who had received some great kindness from the Archbishop, that played the part of a traitor. A vast number of prisoners was taken—"how many," says the Chronicler, "cannot be told." When they had plundered the city at their pleasure, the Danes returned to their ships, taking the Archbishop with them. They kept their prisoner till the Easter of the next year, expecting to get a large ransom for him. The Chronicler says nothing of his having made any promise that this ransom should be paid. Later accounts tell us that such promise was made, and that the Archbishop refused to keep it, declaring that he had sinned in making it, and that he would not rob his countrymen to purchase his freedom or his life. The Danes were furious at their disappointment. He was brought before a council of nobles on the Saturday in Easter week. The council seems to have been held after a feast, and the Danes were excited with wine, of which they had just received a bountiful supply from France. They pelted the Archbishop as he stood before them with a shower of bones and bullocks' horns. At last one of them, a Dane whom he had himself converted and confirmed, put an end to his sufferings by cleaving his head with an axe. His body was given up to his countrymen, and buried by them with great state in the Cathedral of St. Paul's in London. The title of martyr was conferred upon him by his contemporaries, and has remained attached to his name down to this day. The day of his death,

April 19th, is still marked by his name in the Calendar of the Anglican Church.

Shortly after the murder of the Archbishop, the ransom for England, forty-eight thousand pounds, was paid. The money was wasted, like all that had been spent in the same way before. But what we may call a really valuable purchase was made at the same time. Among the chiefs of the Danish fleet was one Thorkill, who seems to have been better than some of his fellows. He had endeavoured to save the Archbishop's life, offering all that he had, except his ship, by way of ransom. This Thorkill now took service with Ethelred, and brought with him five-and-forty ships, a force which was soon to be nearly all that was left to the English king.

And now Sweyn himself again appears upon the scene. William of Malmesbury speaks of his having been invited over by Thorkill. But the truth is that he needed no invitation, and, if he had, Thorkill, who resolutely opposed him when he came, was not the man to give it. He had probably been biding his time, till he saw England in the last stage of exhaustion, and now came to take possession of what was virtually a conquered country. If Thorkill had anything to do with his coming, it was by proving to him the necessity of acting before a rival of his own race became formidably strong.

Some time in 1013[1] Sweyn sailed to England. One of the writers of the next generation gives a gorgeous description of his fleet. The beaks of the

[1] One account says, "in the spring." The Chronicler has, "before the month of August."

ships were of brass, the sterns adorned with lions of gold. On the mastheads were shapes of birds and dragons for weather-cocks. Figures of men, of bulls, of dolphins were to be seen as figure-heads. Sweyn had with him his younger son Canute and that warrior-saint, Olaf of Norway, whom he probably brought with him because he was unwilling to leave him behind. The fleet touched at Sandwich, but then, by a change of policy in the Danish king, sailed northwards to the Humber. From the Humber he turned into the Trent, and proceeded up that river as far as Gainsborough. Here Uhtred, Alderman of Northumberland, gave in his adhesion. The example was followed by the Five Burghs, and, indeed, by all England to the north of Watling Street. Once more the Danelaw was separated from England, and the work of the successors of Alfred was undone. Hostages were given by the principal towns, and these, together with the fleet, were given over to the care of the young Canute. Meanwhile the King pursued his conquests. "Never did army," says the Chronicler, "do more damage than his." Oxford submitted to him, and gave hostages; Winchester did the same. From Winchester he marched eastward to London, and there for the first time he met with resistance. "The citizens would not surrender themselves, but fought fiercely against him, having with them King Ethelred and Thorkill." The valiant Londoners once more held their own, and Sweyn retreated up the valley of the Thames as far as Wallingford, and thence again to Bath. At Bath all the nobles of the West came in and submitted themselves. From Bath Sweyn

went northwards to his fleet, "and all the nation acknowledged him for their true king," London itself feeling constrained to follow the example. The citizens had to find hostages, and also to provide for the Danes. At the same time Thorkill was demanding supplies of war; for his fleet, which lay at Greenwich, was still faithful to the English king.

Before long, Ethelred gave up the struggle. His Queen Emma had already crossed the sea to her brother, Richard of Normandy, taking with her her two sons. The King kept his Christmas in the Isle of Wight, where he was safe under the protection of his Danish mercenaries, and then crossed the sea to Normandy.

Sweyn was now virtually King of England. But it does not appear that he was ever formally crowned. Indeed, he died but a few weeks after Ethelred's departure. "He died," says the Chronicler, "on Candlemas." [1] Later accounts embellished this simple mention of his death with some wonderful details. The King, according to them, had demanded a vast ransom from the town of St. Edmundsbury, under a threat of destroying town and abbey, and slaughtering all the inhabitants of both. He repeated these threats to the envoys of the town in an assembly held at Gainsborough. But when he had uttered them the holy saint and martyr, King Edmund, approached him, visible only to Sweyn, and ran him through with his spear. The next day he expired in agony. According to another narrative, he named Canute as his successor, bade him study the doctrines of Christianity,

[1] February 2nd.

and strictly enjoined on him to carry away his body for burial in his native land.

The Danish fleet gladly accepted the succession of the young Canute.[1] But he was not to become King of England without a long and fierce struggle. The bishops and nobles met in assembly, and resolved to call Ethelred back to his throne. "No lord," they said in the letter they sent to him, "was dearer to them than their natural lord, if only he would govern them more righteously than he had hitherto done." Ethelred's answer, sent by his son Edward, was a greeting to his people, a promise that he would be a faithful lord to them, would amend all that had been done amiss, and pardon all that had been done or said against him. This message he followed up by returning to England in the early spring.

Canute remained at Gainsborough till Easter, occupying his troops with the usual plundering of the country. Apparently he was not prepared for the vigorous action of Ethelred, who came with a strong force into Lindsey, the Gainsborough district of Lincolnshire. Anyhow he did not hold his ground, but sailed southward to Sandwich, leaving the unhappy Anglo-Danes of Lindsey to be wasted with fire and sword by the English king. Canute revenged himself for the attack made on him by mutilating the hostages whom the English towns had put into his hands.

But with counsellors such as Edric near the throne, nothing was likely to prosper. An assembly was held early in the year at Oxford. Among the nobles who

[1] He must have been about eighteen years of age.

attended it were two Anglo-Danes, Morcar and Sigferth, from Northumbria. Edric murdered them, and ordered the tower of the cathedral, in which their attendants took refuge, to be set on fire. Their possessions were seized by Edmund,[1] one of the king's sons, who also married Aldgyth, widow of Sigferth, taking her from the custody of the Abbot of Malmesbury, to which she had been committed by the king's order.

Canute, who had sailed to Denmark, after his vengeance on the hostages, had come back with a great fleet, as numerous and as splendidly equipped as that which his father had brought with him two years before. He had now been joined by Thorkill, who, for some reason which we do not know, had deserted Ethelred. The Danish fleet touched at Sandwich, then sailing along the South Coast, disembarked the army that it carried at Poole, in Dorsetshire. The invaders ravaged Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, and Somersetshire. Ethelred was lying sick at Cosham in Wiltshire, but Edmund and Edric were in the field—each at the head of an army. When united they must have made a formidable force, but treachery as usual interfered to prevent any good result. "Edric sought to lead the Atheling[2] astray, but could not. Then they departed from each other without giving battle, and yielded the field to their enemies. Edric also drew over to himself forty ships from the King's fleet, and submitted himself to Canute." This act of

[1] Afterwards called "Ironsides."

[2] The English equivalent for prince.

treason was the signal for the submission of a large part of Western England to the Danish king.

In the following year (1016) the gallant Edmund was again baffled in his efforts to resist the progress of the Danish power. Canute opened the campaign by ravaging the Midlands; Edmund gathered an army to meet him; but he could get no support. Ethelred, who was at London, was deterred from joining him with such forces as he could raise in that city by rumours of treachery, and Edmund was compelled to disband his own army. Then he raised fresh forces; this time by the help of his wife's brother, Utred of Northumbria. But Utred [1] deserted him, on the approach of Canute, to whom he gave in his submission.

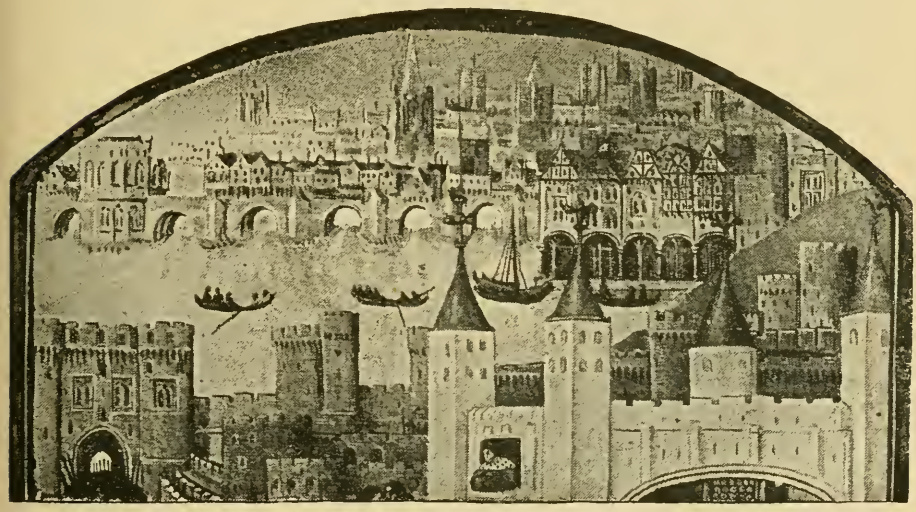
Nothing but London, where Ethelred still found shelter, remained to the house of Alfred. Edmund hastened to join him there, and Canute also, who had gone southwards to Poole, after the settlement of Northumbria, set sail with the intention of attacking the city. He had not reached it when Ethelred, who had long been suffering from sickness, died (April 23, 1016).

England had now two kings. Canute was crowned by command of an assembly which met at Southampton; another which was gathered in London gave the crown to Edmund.

Canute at once proceeded to claim his kingdom. He sailed up the Thames, and laid siege to London with a fleet that numbered, it was said, three hundred

[1] Utred was put to death by Canute at the instigation of Edric, who succeeded to his earldom of Northumbria.

and forty sail. He could not pass the bridge which then spanned the river, probably at the same place where London Bridge now stands. He then made a great ditch, on the southern bank, drew nine of his ships through it, and then got command of the upper river. The city, however, still held out, and an assault made on the walls was repulsed with great loss by the citizens. Not long afterwards, Canute



OLD LONDON BRIDGE.
(*Earliest known representation*, 11*th Century*.)

raised the siege and marched westwards to encounter his rival; a succession of fierce battles followed.

Edmund won a victory over a small Danish force near Gillingham, in Dorsetshire. Then he met Canute himself at Sherston,[1] in Wiltshire. He put his best men in the front rank, and kept the rest

[1] Possibly the Sherston near Malmesbury, but the identification of the place is doubtful.

for a reserve. After exhorting them to do their best for country and home, he gave the signal for battle. Edmund himself was everywhere, directing as a general and fighting as a soldier. The enemy, with whom were ranged the men of Hampshire and Wiltshire under Edric, were too strong to be repulsed, and the battle was undecided. It was renewed next day. Edmund made a gallant attempt to strike down Canute himself. He succeeding in cleaving his rival's shield, and in wounding his horse. Overpowering numbers then forced him to retire. It was then, according to the narrative of the battle, that the traitor, Edric, holding up the head of one Osmar, who was strangely like to Edmund, cried out to the men of Dorset and Devon, that their king was slain, and bade them submit. Edmund, however, showed himself to his troops, and stopped the panic. The second day left the battle still undecided, but Canute broke up his camp that night, and returned to London. To London Edmund followed him, and succeeding in raising the siege of that city. He won another victory over the Danes at Brentford. Then something drew him off to the West. He returned, and again vanquished the enemy at Otford, in Kent, and so, says the Chronicler, would have utterly destroyed them, but that Edric kept him at Eglesford. What means he used we do not know, and cannot guess. The Chroniclers seem to have attributed all failures and reverses to this malignant influence.

The last and greatest battle of the war was fought at Aslingdon, in South-eastern Essex. Edmund drew up his force in three lines, and at first stood on

the defensive. But Canute, though urged by Thorkill to attack, was too cautious to do so. When he began to move, it was seemingly to make his way to his ships, the very thing which Edmund was eager to prevent. When he saw this, therefore, he gave the signal for battle, and charged down the hill upon the enemy. He led the attack himself, and charged the enemy, sword in hand, like a thunderbolt, as one of the Chroniclers expresses it. The Danes began to give ground before this furious onset, and it seemed as if a really decisive victory might be won. Then the bad genius of England intervened. "Edric took flight with the men of Herefordshire, and betrayed his natural lord and the whole English people." It is an inexplicable mystery how the traitor was fighting on the English side, and, it would seem, in high command. The English still held out, but it was with a weakened and broken line. The battle was not ended by darkness. When the moon rose English and Danes were still engaged in the struggle. At last victory plainly declared for the invaders, and the English fled in all directions, Edmund himself hastening from the field. Some of the noblest chiefs of England fell on that fatal day, among them Ulfkytel, the brave East Anglian whom we have seen twice doing battle with the Danes. Great Churchmen, too, were slain on the field of battle, the Bishop of Dorchester, and Wulfrig, Abbot of Ramsey, among them.

Edmund was still unvanquished. He raised another army, and prepared to fight again for his throne. But the nobles were weary of battle, and persuaded him to make peace. The two kings met on a little island in

the Severn, and there agreed to a partition of the kingdom, Edmund was to have Southern, Canute Northern England.

It was but for a short time that this partition remained in force. On St. Andrew's Day (Nov. 30th), Edmund Ironsides died. The cause of death is uncertain. He had done enough in the last few months of his life to exhaust the powers even of a healthy man, and we know that the princes of his house were not healthy. Of course his death was attributed to violence; equally of course Edric was named as the murderer. He was buried at Glastonbury by the side of his grandfather, Edgar the Peaceable.

XXVII.

CANUTE.

IT is impossible to say what were really the terms of the treaty by which England was divided between Canute and Edmund—were these thereafter to be two kingdoms, handed down to the heirs of each prince? or was the survivor of the two to inherit the whole? Canute contended for the latter view, and summoned a great assembly of nobles and Churchmen to meet at London for the settlement of the question. Some of these great personages had been present at the making of the treaty. They swore—for the treaty itself does not seem to have been produced—that Edmund had made no stipulation as to the succession of his brother, and that he had provided for the interests of his children, by arranging that Canute should be their guardian till they reached their majority. This settled the question of the succession, and Canute was acknowledged without further difficulty as King of England. Early in the next year (1017) he was solemnly crowned at London. He received the usual vows of obedience from his new subjects, and swore in return that he would rule them justly. All enmity between Englishmen and Danes

was to cease, all past grudges were to be forgotten. The brother of the late king, the Atheling Edric, was outlawed, and his children were sent out of the country—first to Olaf of Sweden, and from him to Stephen, King of Hungary.[1] There still remained a possible enemy in Emma, the widow of Ethelred, who, with her children, was now living at the Court of her brother, Richard of Normandy. Canute made her an offer of marriage, which she did not hesitate to accept. There was no little difference in their ages, for Emma had become the wife of Ethelred when her second husband was but seven years of age. But the "Gem of the Normans" was, doubtless, still beautiful, and Canute may have been moved by love as well as by policy in offering her marriage. Emma made no effort to secure the rights of her children by her first husband. It was stipulated that the crown of England should descend to any heir whom she might bear to Canute. When in the course of the year the outlawed Edric came to his end[2] Canute felt himself secure on his new throne, as far as rivals of the English royal house were concerned. But there were still persons of whom he was anxious to rid himself. It was not long before Edric

[1] It was said that Canute wished Olaf to put these children to death, as likely afterwards to become troublesome claimants of the throne. Olaf was unwilling either to commit this crime, or to offend his powerful neighbour by protecting possible rivals, and sent them to Hungary. Edmund, the elder of the two, married one of Stephen's daughters, and died in early manhood without children; of the younger, Edward, we shall hear again.

[2] According to the more commonly accepted account, he was assassinated by order of Canute. William of Malmesbury declares that he returned secretly to England, and died of grief.

the traitor met with the reward of his many misdeeds. Canute, very soon after his coronation, had appointed him Earl of Mercia. But on the occasion of a visit to the Court angry words arose between the king and the earl. Edric is said to have boasted of having first deserted and then murdered King Edmund. Thereupon Canute burst out: "Therefore you shall die, for you are guilty of treason both to God and to me." Whether he was killed in the King's presence or secretly strangled is doubtful, but he certainly disappears from history. Some time afterwards[1] Thorkill the Dane, who had received the government of East Anglia, was banished. Other nobles, both Englishmen and Danes, were got rid of in the same way. Finally the King relieved himself of the dangerously large force which he had brought with him from home. A Danegelt of £82,500 was exacted from the kingdom, a tenth of it being levied in London, and the fleet was sent back to Denmark.

In the year after his accession Canute held a great council at Oxford. The result of their deliberations may be briefly summed up by saying that they decreed that the laws of King Edgar should be observed. The days of Edgar the Peacemaker were, it is evident, looked back to as a golden age when equal justice was done between man and man. "In this year," says the Chronicler, and it is all that he says, "Englishmen and Danes were made to be of one mind at Oxford."

In 1019 Canute felt himself sufficiently well settled

[1] He was actually banished in 1021, but it is convenient to mention the event in this connection.

on the English throne to be able to pay a visit to Denmark. He "abode there the whole winter," and busied himself with extending his dominions. His achievements in this way would have little or no connection with English history, but that they served to bring into notice a great Englishman of whom we shall hear much hereafter.

Godwin, son of Wulfnoth,[1] had been promoted to high office shortly after the accession of Canute. He now accompanied him on his visit to Denmark, in command, it would seem, of a contingent of English soldiers. The Danish king marched against his northern neighbours, the Wends. The two armies lay encamped close to each other, and in the night Godwin and his Englishmen attacked the enemy and captured their camp. Canute, in gratitude for this service, loaded the English leader with honours, gave him Gytha, the sister of the Danish Earl Ulf, to wife, and on his return to England in the following year made him Earl of Wessex.[2]

In 1020 Canute made a thankoffering for his victory at Assandune, which is memorable in more ways than one. "He went to Assandune," says the Chronicler, "and suffered that there should be built there a church of stone and rubble for the souls of the men who had been slain in that place, and gave it to a certain priest, whose name was Stigand. If this Stigand was the brave archbishop who was one of the last English-

[1] There are several accounts of the parentage of Godwin, but this seems the most probable.

[2] William of Malmesbury transfers the whole of this story to the year 1025 and to another war.

men to hold out against the Norman Conquerors, this was a notable appointment.

Of the home history of England during the remainder of Canute's reign there is little to tell. It was a time of peace, such as the country had not enjoyed since the days of Edgar. Its most notable incidents were the King's journey to Rome in 1027, and his legislation, which may be assigned to the years 1028–1035. His letter, addressed from Rome to "the two archbishops, to all bishops and nobles, and to all the nation of the English" is a remarkable document. He declares that he had been to Rome to pray for the forgiveness of his sins, for the safety of his dominion, and of the people under his government. He describes the honourable treatment which he had received, and the concessions which he had gained from foreign princes, that his subjects should visit the Holy City without hindrance, and from the Pope that English archbishops should not have to pay the vast sums which had before been demanded of them for their palls.[1] And he then goes on, "Since I have vowed to God Himself henceforward to reform my life in all things, and justly and piously to govern the kingdom and peoples subject to me, and to maintain equal justice in all things; and have determined through God's assistance to set right anything hitherto unjustly done, either through the intemperances of my youth, or through negligence, therefore I call to witness and command my counsellors, to whom I have entrusted the government of my kingdom, that they by no means, either through

[1] See p. 256.

fear of myself, or favour to any powerful person, suffer henceforth any injustice, or cause such to obtain in all my kingdom."

These good intentions he seems to have honestly endeavoured to carry out by the legislation which occupied his attention during the latter part of his reign, whenever he was not occupied with the affairs of the other countries which owned his power. The substance of this legislation may be thus stated :

1. Justice was to be administered strictly, but mercifully, with a scrupulous regard for human life. The weak and poor were to be pitied, the powerful visited with the full rigour of the law.

2. The trade in slaves, as carried on by sending Christians into foreign countries, was prohibited.

3. All Pagan rites of worship and superstitious observances, such as the worship of sun and moon, of trees, of stones, or fountains, were forbidden. All witches and soothsayers were to be severely punished.

4. The English and Danish systems of law were to prevail thenceforward in the districts in which they had before been in force.

5. The dues paid to the King were lightened in amount, and settled on a fixed principle, exactions that had become customary being abolished. What we should now call the "game laws" were put on a reasonable footing, which compares favourably with the jealous tyranny exercised in this matter by the Norman kings. Canute's words are, "I will that every man have his hunting in wood and field on his own possessions, but let him beware my hunting."

Order was provided for by the institution of a force which had some likeness to a standing army, at least to that part of it which is especially attached to the person of the sovereign.[1] The "House Carles" —this was the name of the force—were originally the crews of that part of the fleet which Canute retained in England. As time went on they must have been recruited from other sources, and we hear of persons not Danes being enrolled among them. Originally indeed they must have included men of various nationalities, and it is probable that during the eighteen years of Canute's reign not a few Englishmen were enlisted among them. Canute never showed any jealousy of the English; on the contrary, he seems to have had a distinct preference for them, as he certainly looked upon England as his chief kingdom. One authority describes the House Carles as "an army gathered out of various nations, of such, that is to say, as were subject to the king's rule." It is not clear what were the number of the force. One writer says that there were *six thousand* of them. This would allow a crew of one hundred and fifty for each ship. But it is not likely that the ships were entirely stripped of their crews. It is more probable that the fighting men were taken out of them. Were we to halve the number we should get a total of three thousand, and this is the figure actually men-

[1] Called in England the "Household Troops," a name given to the regiments of Life Guards (cavalry). The relation of these to the sovereign is particularly close. They are under his personal orders. The infantry regiments of the "Guards" (Grenadiers, Coldstreams, and Fusiliers) were originally on a similar footing, but are now simply a *corps d'élite* of the general army.

tioned by another writer. They may have been afterwards increased. The smaller number would suffice for putting down any casual outbreak, or for forming the nucleus of a larger army when such might be wanted. And their cost would certainly be as much as could be easily borne by the moderate revenues of an English king in the eleventh century.

Of the relations in which they stood to the people we know little or nothing. We may be sure that they would need to be kept in strict order, and we may also feel tolerably certain that Canute was the man to do this very effectively. Stories are told of their violence to the English, and it is not impossible that these may be true. Soldiers in a conquered country are apt to be violent, and England was, in a degree, a conquered country, though Canute did his best to bring about a better state of things. Perhaps it would be safe to conjecture that during his reign such misconduct would be the exception, because regarded with disfavour by a master whom the Carles did not venture to despise, that in the days of his worthless sons it came to be the rule.

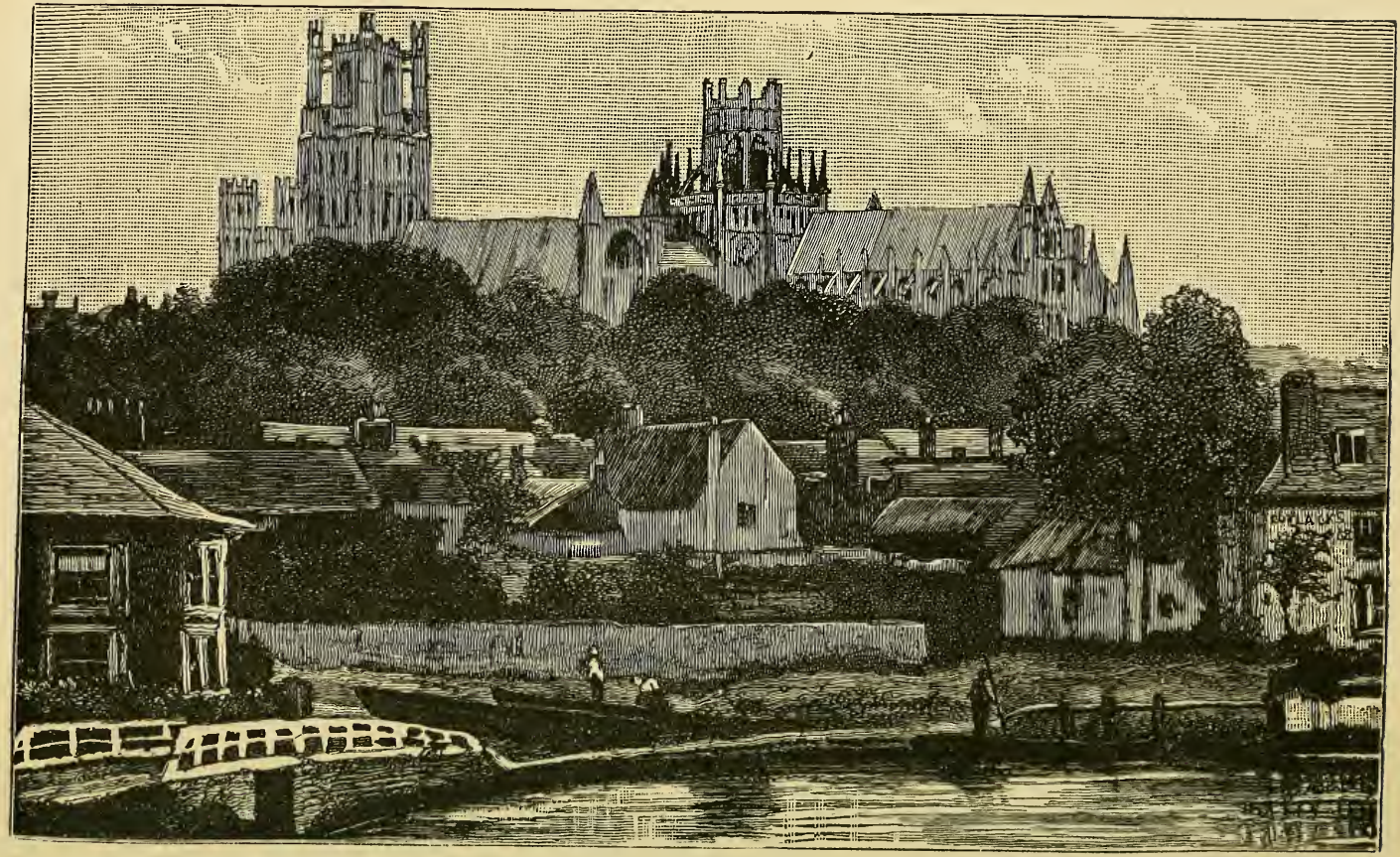
An interesting story is told of Canute's own relation to this force. In a fit of passion the King killed one of the Carles with his own hand. When he came to himself, he felt the deepest repentance for his violence, and submitted himself to the judgment of the whole body. They were embarrassed at having to deal with so powerful a criminal, and refused to pronounce any sentence. Then the King took the law into his own hands, and imposed upon himself a

fine for bloodshed[1] nine times greater than that which would ordinarily have been paid.

Among the good resolutions which Canute announced in his famous letter from Rome was one, that thereafter the Church should have its dues regularly paid. This he seems to have kept, and more than kept, for he was a liberal benefactor to religious persons and foundations. It was, indeed, to monks and monasteries that this liberality was chiefly shown. This was the feeling of his time. The strict rule and ascetic life of these inhabitants of the cloister appealed to the feelings of men who lived in the world, and spent their days, for the most part in violence and rude pleasures. The secular clergy seemed, and indeed may often have been, too much like themselves. Canterbury, Winchester, and Ramsey[2] are mentioned as some of the monasteries on which the King and his Queen Emma bestowed their bounty. Another foundation which he had many reasons for favouring was that of St. Edmund, the East Anglian king and martyr. The saint had met his death from Danish hands, and had showed, according to the story which has already been told, that he had not forgotten his wrongs, and was able to avenge them. Accordingly we find Canute rebuilding the church which had been dedicated to the saint in the town now called St. Edmundsbury. And

[1] This fine, a very ancient and wide-spread custom, was called the "were-gild," and varied according to the rank of the person slain, from the "were-gild" of a king, which was fixed at £360, to that of a churl, fixed at £10.

[2] Ramsey is in Huntingdonshire. The abbey was founded in 969.



ELY CATHEDRAL.

he had, if we may believe tradition, a special liking for Ely. A stanza is said to have been improvised by him as he was passing in his barge along the Cam, the river which flows by Ely. It may be thus modernized :

"The Ely monks sang clear and high
As King Canute was passing by.
'Row near the door and hear them sing,'
Cried to his kn ghts Canute the king." [1]

"Merie siengen the muneches biunen Ely
Do Cnut ching ren ther by
Roweth enichtes noer tha land
And here we thes muneches saeng."

(The letters peculiar to old English have been changed to their modern equivalents.)

Though we are chiefly concerned with Canute's doings as an English king, we must not forget that he had other dominions. Denmark he inherited from his father, of Norway he possessed himself after a fierce struggle with that turbulent saint, Olaf of Norway. He made a claim to this kingdom in 1024, and enforced it by an expedition in 1027 (apparently after his return from Rome), and again by another, made with a much stronger force, in the year following. Olaf was quite unable to make any resistance, and fled into Sweden. Two years afterwards he was invited back by some discontented nobles, and was defeated, not so much by the forces of Canute, as by the Norwegian peasants at the

[1] The form in which these verses come down to us is much later than Canute's time, indeed is not earlier than the thirteenth century.

battle of Vaerdalen [1] (1030). Sweden has been said to have been one of his kingdoms. This is an error, though he possibly was master of some few places which are now included in the Swedish territories. Besides being king of England, he was overlord of Scotland, his power, reaching as far as the Hebrides, which, indeed, had for many years been largely occupied by men of Danish race. Ireland also owned his supremacy, for we find that coins were minted in his name at Dublin. Altogether, at least during the latter years of his life, he had a wide-reaching and solid dominion, and may well have cherished the idea which has been attributed to him, of founding a great northern empire.

Of his relations with foreign powers not much is known. When he was at Rome he met the Emperor, Conrad II., and, indeed, was present at his coronation. With this prince he made a treaty by which some portions of Denmark, which had been seized by one of Conrad's predecessors, were to be restored. The alliance was strengthened by the betrothal of one of Canute's daughters to the Emperor. Of his dealings with the Norman Dukes a not very clear story is told. It seems evident that there was some quarrel between Canute and Duke Robert, who had succeeded his father, Richard, in 1028. Robert had married Estrith, Canute's sister, and widow of Earl Ulf. He is said to

[1] Otherwise called Sticklestead. The adherence of the peasants to the cause of Canute may be taken as a proof of the popularity of his rule; but it doubtless had something to do with the quarrel between Christianity and Paganism. The Norwegian people were still, in a great measure, heathen, while Olaf was an enthusiastic champion of Christianity, which he preached in a somewhat violent way.

have neglected and ill-treated her, and even to have sent her back to England. Besides this he claimed the crown of England for his cousin, the son of King Ethelred by Emma, one of the princes whose rights we have seen so quietly put aside on the occasion of their mother's second marriage.

What was actually done is not so easy to decide. The northern chroniclers declare that Canute made two expeditions against Normandy, that Robert fled to Jerusalem to avoid his vengeance, and that he himself met with his death before Rouen. All this seems to be fiction. What is more likely to be true is that the Duke fitted out a fleet with which he intended to invade England and restore the English princes to the throne of their father ; that this fleet met with rough weather, and was driven out of its course ; that finally peace was made between the two princes. One of the chroniclers relates that in his day the remains of the ships with which Duke Robert had made this unsucful attempt was still to be seen at Rouen.

In 1035 Canute died. We know nothing of the circumstances of his death except that it took place at Shaftesbury. He could not have been more than forty years of age.

The king who thus passed away in the flower of his manhood, respected if not beloved by his people, and soon to be very passionately regretted by them, was a very different man from the violent youth, who, some seventeen years before, had been crowned king in London. But though the change was great, it was still one that we can understand and account for. Canute felt strongly that England was, of all his

possessions, the one which was best worth having; and he was great enough to see that he must hold it as an English, not as a foreign, ruler. He did his best to live up to this position. The son of a heathen king, one, it must be remembered, who had relapsed from Christianity into heathenism, he became a Christian, and gave no small proofs of the sincerity of his conversion. Brought up amongst associations of savagery and violence, and inheriting, it may well be believed, a fierce and passionate temper, he did his best to conquer himself. That he never wholly succeeded it is easy to believe; the story that has been told of the house carl whom he slew in his rage proves as much. But self-restraint seems to have been the rule of his life. We may not compare him with such a king as Alfred. Scruples had little power over him when some object of policy was to be attained. The writers who speak most highly in his praise, who describe him as a wise and mighty ruler, also talk of his craft. His standard of kingship was not, perhaps, the highest, but he did his best to be true to it.

Of the man himself we get a few glimpses over and above those which the history has given us. One of them reminds us of the story which describes him as listening with delight to the chanting of the Ely monks. He was a "great lover of minstrels," says one of the chroniclers, after praising his might and his craft. Among the poets that came to his Court was a certain Othere the Black, an Icelander, and a kinsman of the great Sighvat. The story of his welcome runs thus:

"After evensong the King came into the hall and

said, 'I see a man here who is not of this country. He looks like a poet, and I would sooner have him to second me in a wager of battle than any one here.' And now Othere entered the hall and addressed the King in a verse,[1] and forthwith asked to be allowed to recite a poem on the King. Cnut answered, and the poem was delivered to a great gathering at the next day's mod, and the King praised it, and took a Russian cap off his head, broidered with gold and with gold knots to it, and bade his chamberlain fill it with silver, and give it to the poet. He did so, and reached it over men's shoulders, for there was a crowd, and the heaped-up silver tumbled out of the hood on the mod-stage [the platform for the speakers]. He was going to pick it up, but the King told him to let it be. 'The poor shall have it, and thou shalt not lose by it!'"

We touch a higher point in the well-known story of the King and his courtiers which I shall tell in the words of the Chronicler, Henry of Huntingdon, who first relates it. The whole passage may be given:

"Three things did the same King wittily and well. Firstly, he gave his daughter to wife to the Emperor of Rome with riches beyond all counting. Secondly, journeying to Rome, he caused that the mischievous exactions, tolls by name, that were levied on the road that leads through Gaul to Rome, should be diminished to one half, paying, therefor, moneys of his own. Thirdly, in the very height of his power, he bade set his chair on the shore of the sea, when the

[1] The verse ran thus, "Let us so greet the King of the Danes, Irish, English, and Island Dwellers, that his praise may travel wide over all lands as far as the pillars of heaven."

tide was flowing ; and to the tide, as it flowed, he said, 'Thou art my subject ; and the land on which I sit is mine ; nor hath there ever been one that resisted my bidding, and suffered not. I command thee, therefore, that thou come not up on my land, nor presume to wet the garments and limbs of thy lord.' But the sea, rising after its wont, wetted without respect the feet and legs of the King. Therefore leaping back he said, 'Let all dwellers on the earth know that the power of kings is a vain and foolish thing, and that no one is worthy to bear the name of king, save only Him, whose bidding the heavens, and the earth, and the sea obey by everlasting laws.' Nor ever thereafter did King Canute set his crown of gold upon his head, but put it for ever on the image of our Lord, which was fastened to the cross."

XXVIII.

THE SONS OF CANUTE.

CANUTE left two sons by his first wife, Elgiva, and a son and a daughter by Emma of Normandy. The sons of Elgiva, indeed, were commonly said not to be the children of Canute. The story was that she never bore a child, but that she palmed off on her husband two boys whom she had purchased for the purpose. The story has an incredible look, and curiously resembles the fiction which, for many years, half England devoutly believed about the Old Pretender.[1] Sweyn, the elder of the two sons of Elgiva, had been Canute's vicegerent in Norway. His cruelties excited a revolt in that country, and he was expelled, together with his mother. There seem never to have been any question of calling him to the throne of England. Harold was in England at the time of the King's death. Nothing was said in any will about his rights of succession. On the other hand, it had been stipulated, as has been already said, on the occasion of

[1] Commonly called the "Warming Pan" story. It was declared that Mary of Modena, the wife of James II., of England, did not really give birth to a child, but that the infant, afterwards the Old Pretender, was introduced into the queen's chamber in a warming-pan.

Canute's second marriage, that the crown was to go to a son of Emma. Such a son there was, Hardicanute by name, who had been sent by his father to act as his viceroy in Denmark.

The question now arose—who was to succeed Canute? Hardicanute had the better right, but he was away, and he showed no desire to return. He preferred to remain, for the present at least, in Denmark, which was indeed threatened by the new rulers of Norway.[1] Harold, on the other hand, had the advantage of being on the spot. A council was held soon after Canute's death to determine this matter of the succession, and its deliberations showed a great difference of opinion. Godwin, the Earl of Wessex, supported the claim of Hardicanute. But Wessex stood alone; the rest of England, led by Leofwin of Mercia, took up the cause of Harold; London, where a great Danish colony had now been established, was strongly in his favour. Finally a compromise was agreed upon. Mercia and Northumbria, in other words, the Midlands and the North, to which we should probably add, the East of England, were to belong to Harold; Hardicanute was to have the South and West. Till he should return from Denmark, Emma, holding her Court at Winchester, was to act as regent. The administration really lay in the hands of Godwin.

But there were other claimants to the throne of whom the assembly at Oxford took no account—Emma's two sons by Ethelred—the Athelings, Alfred and Edward. They had resided from early childhood at the Court of their kinsman, the Duke of Normandy,

[1] The son of St. Olaf had been recalled to the throne.

and they now made an attempt to recover their inheritance. The history of this attempt is involved from beginning to end in much obscurity. The Atheling Edward is said to have sailed from Normandy with a fleet of forty ships, to have landed near Southampton, and to have made his way to his mother at Winchester. But neither she nor the people generally gave him a welcome. His Norman followers, too, began to plunder the country, and excited much hatred. Finally matters began to have so threatening a look, that Edward retreated to the coast, embarked, and made his way back to Normandy. The story may be true ; but if it is, it shows Edward in a much more vigorous character than we ever find him in again.

About the adventurer of the other Atheling, Alfred, we know more ; but here, also, much is doubtful. The young prince certainly landed in England. It is equally certain that he was seized, and cruelly put to death. He did not come with a large military force ; he seems, in fact, to have declined the offer of help from Baldwin of Flanders, and to have relied on the support that his countrymen would give him as the son of their old king, Ethelred. The commonly accepted story runs that he landed at Dover ; that at Guildford he was met by Godwin, who pretended to welcome him, and hospitably entertained him and his followers. Then we are told that during the night Godwin's men seized and bound the whole party, that some were killed, and others sold as slaves ; that Alfred himself was sent to King Harold at London ; that Harold caused him to be blinded, and sent him

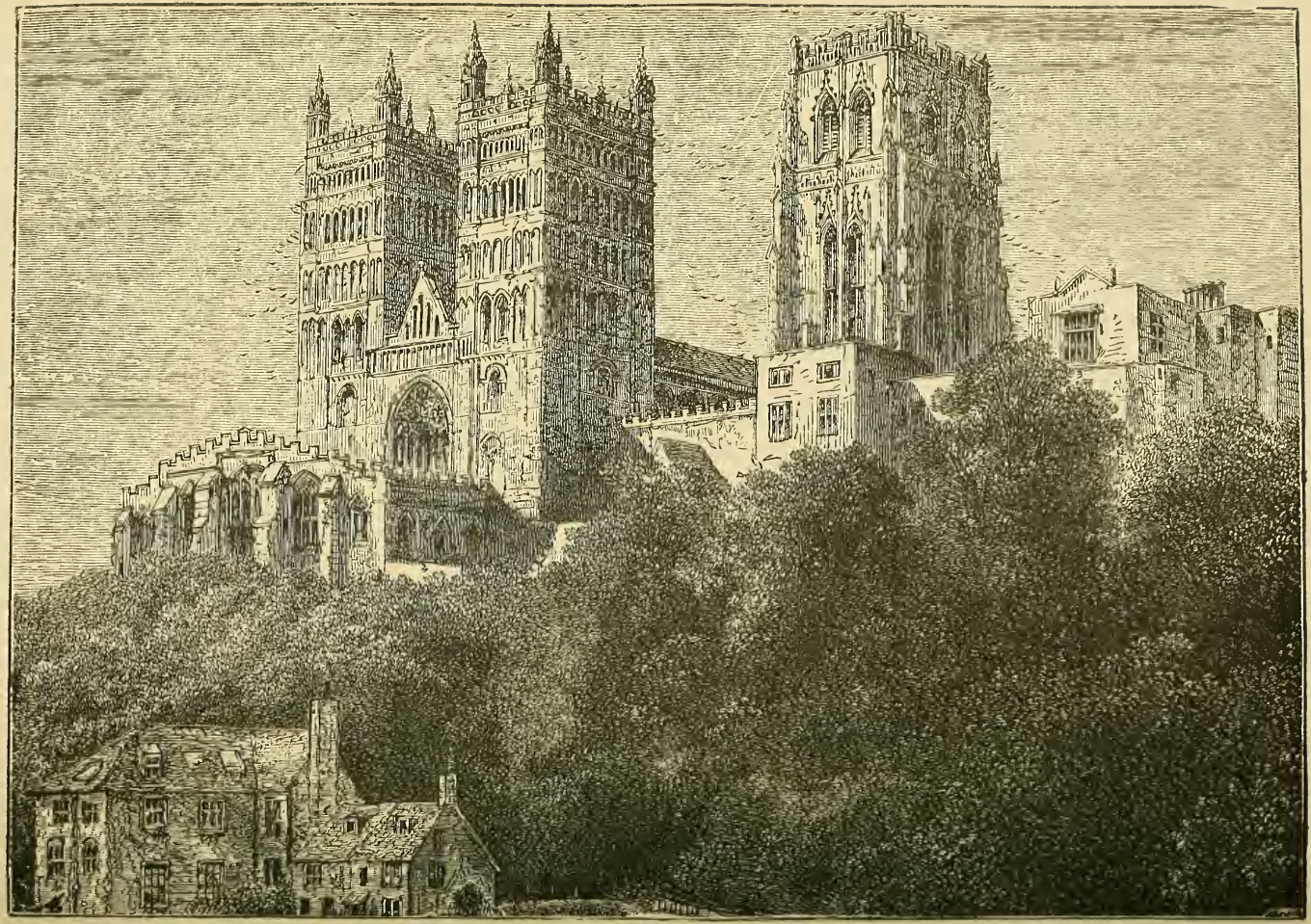
to Ely, where he died, the weapon with which his sight had been destroyed having wounded his brain. Finally, we are told that Godwin acted in the matter as Harold's agent. That many people at the time, and afterwards, believed that Godwin had some share in the deed is manifest. The earl, indeed, was formally accused and tried on the charge about four years afterwards. But it has been pointed out [1] that Godwin was not a minister of Harold, but the principal counsellor of Hardicanute, or rather of the Queen-regent Emma. Further, we have to remember that the trial of Godwin, when the case was regularly examined, resulted in his acquittal. And, finally, we must take into account that, even if the story is true, Alfred did but meet the fate which an unsuccessful pretender must expect. That death was inflicted in a barbarous way is doubtless true; the agreement of testimony on this point is too strong to be set aside. But there is no strong evidence to bring home this cruelty to Godwin, and we may fairly give credit to his own persistent and solemn denials of any guilt in the matter. There is no difficulty, on the other hand, in crediting King Harold with this or any other atrocity. Still it is not unlikely that Godwin had some share, not in the Atheling's death, but in his arrest. Alfred's attempt had it succeeded, would have been as fatal to Hardicanute, Godwin's master, as to Harold; and the earl would have been failing in his duty if he had not done his best to crush it.

The arrangement by which England was divided

[1] By Professor Freeman, who has examined the question exhaustively in his "Norman Conquest."

between the two sons of Canute did not remain long in force. Hardicanute still remained in Denmark, and the nobles of Wessex, vexed at his refusal to return, deposed him, and Harold Harefoot (a name given him on account of his speed of foot) became king over the whole realm (1037). Queen Emma was banished, but Godwin succeeded in gaining the new king's favour, and kept his place and power. Little is told us of Harold's other doings during his short reign. We hear of the Welsh under Griffith making a successful inroad into England, and fighting a battle in which Edwin, brother of the Mercian earl, was killed along with other English nobles. Duncan of Scotland also invaded the country and got as far as Durham. Durham, which we have heard of as uninhabited long after the time of St. Cuthbert, had now become a populous and well-fortified city, crowned by a splendid minster. The Scottish king was defeated with great loss before its walls, and was glad to make his escape to his own dominions.

In 1039 Hardicanute left Denmark, which, now that he had concluded a peace with Magnus of Sweden, he felt to be safe. He spent the winter with his mother, who had found shelter with Baldwin of Flanders, and made preparations for an invasion of England in the following spring. The invasion, however, was never made, for the crown came to him in the course of nature. On March 17th, Harold Harefoot died at Oxford after a long illness. He could not have been more than twenty-six years of age. Of his character we know little, and that little is not in his favour. The Chronicles speak of his irreligion,



DURHAM CATHEDRAL. (*Present State*)

and of his selling Church preferments for money. We have seen that the worst part of the guilt of Alfred's cruel death probably rests upon his shoulders.

Hardicanute was chosen king by an assembly which met shortly after Harold's death. At midsummer he came over to England, landing at Sandwich, and shortly afterwards was crowned at Canterbury. He began his reign by a disgraceful act of vengeance. The body of Harold was taken out of its tomb at Westminster, beheaded, and thrown into the Thames. It was recovered from the river by a fisherman, delivered by him to the Danish colony in London, and buried again in their cemetery outside the walls.[1] This must have been an unpopular act, for Harold had been the choice of nearly the whole English people, and probably had not reigned long enough to excite any great discontent. Still more hateful to the people must have been the imposition of a heavy tax for the payment of the fleet which Hardicanute had brought with him. A sum of £22,000 was levied in one year, and another of £11,000 in the next. It is interesting to be told that each rower received eight marks, and each steersman twelve.[2] The city of Worcester refused, we are told, to make this payment, and an expedition led by Leofric of Mercia, Siward

[1] The reader must conceive of London as not reaching further westward at this time than the western end of Fleet Street, the spot so long marked by Temple Bar. Outside lay the open space which is now called the Strand, or river bank; and here, in the place where the Church of St. Clement Danes still preserves a memory of the fact, was the burial place of the colony.

[2] Eight marks = £5 6s. 8d. (about $27). The Chronicler says that there were sixty-two ships. This, after deducting £496 for the steersmen, would allow rather more than sixty rowers for each ship.

of Northumbria, and other nobles, were made to reduce the city to submission. For four days the country was ravaged, and on the fifth the city itself was burnt. The inhabitants, however, are said to have escaped, some by flight, others by defending themselves on an island of the Severn. The army which Leofric and his companions led against Worcester was largely composed of the House Carles, and we hear many stories of the rapacity and violence of this force. Besides their military duties, they seem to have been employed as collectors of the Danegelt. Tax-gatherers are never welcome visitors, and it may easily be believed that soldiers employed in this capacity may have made themselves specially odious.

The only other memorable act of Hardicanute is his effort to destroy his powerful subject, Earl Godwin. The earl was accused, as has been said, of having brought about the death of the Atheling Alfred. He was tried by the nobles and Churchmen of England. Depositions of his accusers were taken, and he affirmed his innocence upon oath, and his judges also took their oaths that they believed his affirmation. The favour of the King himself, who indeed owed him much, he seems to have regained by a handsome present. This was a splendid ship, which is thus described by Florence of Worcester. It had a gilded beak, and was equipped in a most perfect manner. Eighty warriors manned it, and every one of them bore a golden bracelet on each arm of sixteen ounces weight, was armed with a strongly woven habergeon, and a helmet partly gilt. Each also was girded with a gilded sword; from his left shoulder

hung a Danish axe, bound with gold and silver; in his left hand was a shield, the boss and the nails of which were gilded, and in his right a lance, the English name of which was "aetgar."

Hardicanute appears not to have been married. At least we hear nothing of wife or child. It was probably with the thought of providing for the succession that he invited the Atheling Edward to come over from Normandy. Not long after his reign came to a sudden end. "This year died Hardicanute," we read in one of the Chronicles, "as he stood at his drink." He had honoured with his presence the marriage of his standard-bearer, a great Danish noble, Tofig, surnamed the Proud. The wedding feast was held at Lambeth, where Clapa, the father of the bride, had his house. "As the king stood in good health and joyous, drinking with the aforesaid bride and certain men," he fell down in a fit. As he is described as having struggled fearfully, the fit was probably epileptic. Whatever was its nature, it was fatal in the course of a day or two. With Hardicanute the shortlived dynasty of Canute came to an end. He was probably in his twenty-third or twenty-fourth year.

XXIX.

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR.

AFTER what we have heard of the doings of Canute's sons, it is not surprising to be told by the Chronicler that "all the people chose Edward king in London." They were wearied of Danes; they would have an English ruler. But unfortunately—if indeed it turned out to be unfortunate—the man whom they chose was not an Englishman except in name. That his mother was Norman might not have mattered much, for on the father's side he came of the stock of Alfred; and Englishmen know by experience how thoroughly English kings who are even on both sides of foreign descent can become. But all his life had been spent in Normandy; all his tastes had been formed there; he had no thought but to make England as like the home of his youth as he could. His coming, therefore, was the peaceful beginning of the Conquest which was to be completed, or, it would be better, perhaps, to say decided, four and twenty years afterwards, on the bloody field of Senlac. It was a strange ordering of fate that made this island three times the spoil of three successive swarms of invaders belonging substantially to the same race. Both Saxons and Danes

were rovers of the sea who issued from the harbours of Eastern Europe, and the Normans were Norwegians who had been settled for some generations in a province which they had won from France.[1]

Edward was in Normandy when the crown thus came to him. He was not altogether willing to accept it ; but Earl Godwin persuaded him to yield, and he came over to England. There was still a Danish party in England, and there were some who advocated the claims of Sweyn, the cousin of Hardicanute ; but the influence, the eloquence, and, it was said, the bribes, of Godwin prevailed, and on Easter Day (April 3rd), 1043, Edward was "hallowed king" at Winchester. Ambassadors from France, from Germany, and from Norway, were present, bringing gifts from their sovereigns ; gifts too were offered by the great English nobles, Godwin presenting him, as he had presented his predecessor, with a splendidly adorned ship.

The new king was in the prime of his manhood,[2] "a man," as his biographer describes him, "of very comely person ; his stature moderate ; his hair and

[1] During the ninth century, and in the early years of the tenth, pirates from Norway had sailed up the Seine and formed settlements at the mouth and along the shores of that river. In 912 Rolf the Norseman made a treaty with Charles the Simple, by which a region which, to speak generally, was the Normandy of later times, was handed over to him and his followers. The Northmen then became a settled people, far superior in civilization to their kinsmen, whether in Scandinavia or in England. This superiority they owed in part to the readiness with which they adopted the ways of the Latinized people among whom they had found a home. Their romantic adventures, which took them as far afield as Constantinople, form the subject of one of the volumes in the "Story of the Nations."

[2] He was probably born in 1004.

beard of a singular milky whiteness; his face full; his skin rosy; his hands long and exceedingly white; his fingers long and transparent; the rest of his body without blemish; a truly kingly man." His temper was quick, but commonly under good control; he was gentle, affable, so courteous in manner that his refusal of a request was as pleasant as another man's granting it. He was devout with something, one cannot but believe, of genuine piety in his devotion. He wished well to his people; he was pure in his life. But he was weak, indolent, and, as has often been said, better fitted to be a monk than a king. As Professor Freeman pithily puts it, "So far as a really good man can reproduce the character of a thoroughly bad one, Edward reproduced the character of his father, Ethelred." What such a ruler may do for the country over which he is set will depend mainly upon the hands into which he falls. Kings mostly fall into bad hands; and Edward was not wholly an exception to this rule. Yet he was more fortunate in this respect than some have been. Godwin had great influence over him during the earlier years of his reign, and Harold, Godwin's son, a greater during the latter. Both were true English patriots; but the King's personal preferences were always for Norman advisers. Normans were promoted to offices in the state, and high dignities in the Church; and the way was paved for that forcible usurpation of them which was to follow not many years later.

In the year of his coronation, "fourteen nights before St. Andrew's Mass [St. Andrew's Day is Nov. 30th] the King was so advised that he and Earl

Leofric, and Earl Godwin, and Earl Siward, with their attendants, rode from Gloucester to Winchester unwares upon the lady [Queen Emma], and they bereaved her of all the treasures which she owned, which were not to be told; because before she had been very hard to the King, her son, inasmuch as she had done less for him than he would, both before he was King and after." The Queen Dowager's offence is not very clear. It is often, indeed, reckoned as an offence to be possessed of great treasures of which others stand in need. Doubtless Emma of Normandy had accumulated great wealth, and was unwilling to give up any of it. Possibly she had favoured the cause of her second husband's nephew, Sweyn of Denmark, whom we have already seen put in competition for the crown. If so, with her wealth she lost all power of becoming dangerous, for she was permitted to live quietly at Winchester for the rest of her days.

In the following year (1043) a new danger from the North seemed to threaten England. Magnus of Norway claimed the crown, his, he declared, by virtue of an agreement which he had made with Hardicanute, that whoever of the two should live longer should have the dominions of both. Edward flatly refused to acknowledge the claim, and got together a fleet to resist any attempt that might be made. Whether Magnus meditated any such effort we do not know. The Norse Chronicler tells us that he acknowledged the justice of Edward's answer; but it is certain that for some time he had enough to do to defend himself. Sweyn, aided by Harold Hardrada, of whom we

shall hear again,[1] attacked him at home, and the invasion of England did not take place.

In January, 1045, one of the objects of Earl Godwin's ambition was reached, for the King married his daughter Edith. It was the first of many promotions in this family, a family whose rise and fall make one of the strangest stories in English annals. Godwin had six sons, whose names, arranged in the probable order of their birth, were Sweyn, Harold, Tostig, Gurth, Leofwine, and Wulfnoth. Sweyn had received his earldom, which comprised the counties of Hereford, Gloucester, Oxford, Berkshire, and Somersetshire, early in Edward's reign. Harold was now advanced to the earldom of East Anglia.

Sweyn's was a troubled career, which it may be convenient briefly to relate in this place. In 1046, on his return from a campaign in Wales, he had carried off the Abbess of Leominster. He offered to marry her, but the offer was considered as being scarcely a less wrong than the original outrage. Sweyn resigned his earldom, and crossed the seas to find shelter with Baldwin of Flanders. His earldom was divided between Harold and his cousin, Beorn, nephew of Gytha, Earl Godwin's wife. Beorn already ruled the counties of Hertford, Bedford, Huntingdon, and Buckingham, which had been assigned to him at the same time at which Harold received his earldom. Three years afterwards he returned to England, presented himself before the King, offered to renew his fealty to him, and begged that his earldom might

[1] See p. 356.

be given back to him. The request might have been granted, for Godwin was powerful with the King, and seems not to have had many scruples when the interests of his own family were concerned, but the two earls between whom Sweyn's own dominions had been divided strongly opposed the request. It was refused, and Sweyn went back to his ships which he had left at Bosham (a harbour in West Sussex). What followed is somewhat obscure, but the end is only too plain. Beorn consented to go with Sweyn to the King at Sandwich, probably to propose some compromise on which they had agreed. But it was not to Sandwich that they went. Sweyn persuaded his cousin to accompany him to his ships at Bosham, where his presence, he said, would help to keep his men from deserting. When the two reached Bosham a proposal was made that Beorn should go on board the ships. This he refused to do. Then Sweyn's men bound him, put him into a boat, and took him to the ships. These carried him to Dartmouth, where he was killed by Sweyn's orders. The body was put on shore and buried in a church, but immediately afterwards removed with much pomp to Winchester.

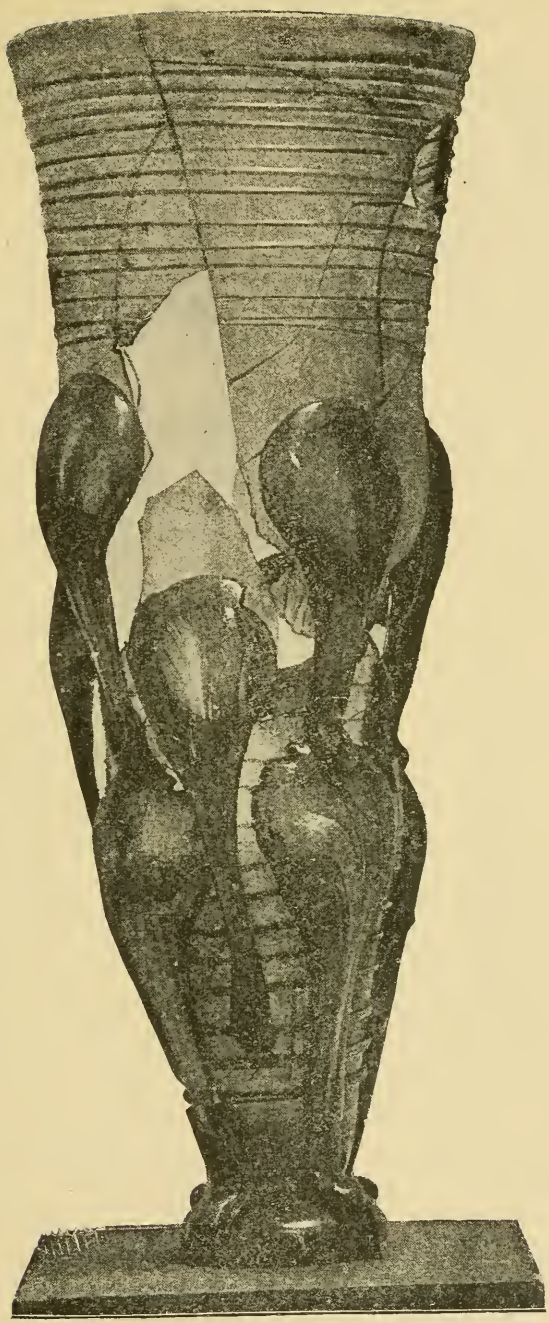
This pomp was a sign of the indignation that Sweyn's crime aroused throughout England. The King and the army declared the murderer to be *nithing*, worthless, the most emphatic condemnation which could be pronounced on any man. Sweyn's own ships, excepting two, deserted him. The criminal himself escaped to Baldwin of Flanders. Yet in spite of these misdeeds he was reinstated in his honours

in 1051,[1] one of the chief English bishops interceding in his favour. But he did not long keep the earldom that was thus given back to him. The year of his return was the year of that temporary overthrow of his house which I shall soon have to relate. He was again outlawed, and though again restored, when his father regained his power, never came back to England. His crime, if overlooked by others, was never forgotten by himself. In the hope of ridding himself of remorse, he went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and died, as he was on his way back, in an obscure spot in Asia Minor. Such was the end of Godwin's eldest son. I now go back to the thread of my story.

The chief events in the narrative of English affairs are the request of Sweyn of Denmark for aid against Magnus and Harold Hardrada, and the ravages of various pirates' expeditions from the North. Sweyn was backed in his petition by Earl Godwin, but failed both in 1047 and the following year to obtain it. Between the two requests his position had greatly changed, for Magnus of Norway was dead, and had bequeathed to him the kingdom of Denmark. Peace was made on the second occasion with Harold Hardrada, Sweyn's great enemy, now king of Norway. The general voice of the kingdom seems to have approved this policy; but it is curious to find, as we shall, some twenty years later, this same Harold making a claim on the crown of England, and invading the country to establish it.

The first appearance of the pirates was in 1048, when two Danes, Lothan and Girling by name, ap-

[1] See p. 332.



ANGLO-SAXON DRINKING GLASS, FOUND AT ASHFORD, KENT.
(*From the original in the British Museum.*)

peared off the south coast of England with five-and-twenty ships. They landed at Sandwich, and carried off a great booty, and then, sailing westward, harried the Isle of Wight. Afterwards we find them ravaging the coast of Essex. By this time the King and his earls had collected a fleet. But it was too late. The pirates sailed away, and reached in safety the harbours of Flanders.

In the following year another Danish fleet, this time from the settlements of that race in Ireland, appeared off the English coast, and sailed up the Bristol Channel. King Griffith of Wales gladly made alliance with them, and in their company invaded England. In default, it would seem, of any lay leader, Ealdred, Bishop of Worcester, hastily raised a force from Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. But the Herefordshire men were probably in great part Welsh in race and sympathy. Anyhow, there were traitors in the camp. A message was conveyed to Griffith suggesting an attack. Early in the morning the Welsh prince and his Danish allies fell upon the camp, and the bishop had to fly for his life.

This seeming revival of Danish piracy did not, however, prevent the repeal of a tax of which we have already heard several times under its name of Danegeld. This repeal took place in 1050.

The next year a great revolution was effected. Earl Godwin was banished from England. Edward's sister, Godgiva, or Goda, had taken as her second husband, Eustace, Count of Boulogne. This nobleman now came on a visit to his brother-in-law. On his way back to his own country he passed through

the town of Dover. His train had armed themselves before entering the town, probably anticipating the unfriendly reception which they got. The townsmen refused to give them quarters, according to one account. According to another, they behaved as though they could deal at their pleasure with the property of the inhabitants. Whatever the cause, a quarrel arose. A Frank wounded a citizen of Dover, and was slain by him. A serious conflict followed. Many were slain on both sides, and finally the Franks were expelled from the town. Eustace made his way to Edward, who was at Gloucester, and complained of the conduct of the citizens of Dover; and Edward, seemingly without waiting to hear the other side, sent an order to Earl Godwin to punish the town. Godwin refused to obey, and, in his turn, laid before the King the grievances which the English people had against the foreigners, who were now beginning to hold many high dignities, civil and ecclesiastical, throughout the kingdom, and who not unfrequently behaved with much insolence. The King was ill disposed to listen to these complaints. According to one account, Robert the Norman, Archbishop of Canterbury, was especially active in turning him against Godwin. Once more the old charge of having brought about the death of the Atheling Alfred was brought up against him. Godwin demanded an audience for himself and his sons; he offered to clear himself on oath in the matter of Alfred. The King refused both requests. Meanwhile a General Assembly had been ordered to meet at Gloucester. Godwin and his sons came with an armed force to

support their claims, though they did not actually enter the city. The northern earls, on the other hand, attended to support the King. Godwin's demand was that Count Eustace and other Frenchmen should be handed over to him. The demand was of course refused. Still peace was preserved, and the assembly was adjourned for a month to meet at London. Once more Godwin and his sons attended in force, this time taking up a position at Southwark. Leofric of Mercia and the other northern earls were also present. But Godwin's men began to leave him. He was summoned to appear before the assembly. His demand for hostages who were to ensure his safety was refused, and he and his sons were ordered to leave the kingdom within five days. He hastened with his wife and his sons, Sweyn, Tostig, and Gurth, to his estates in Sussex, and from thence embarked with all the treasure that he could collect, and sought refuge in Flanders. Harold and another brother fled to Ireland. So complete was the downfall of the house of Godwin that Edward sent away his own wife, who was committed to the charge of the Abbess of Wherwell. The Norman party hastened to secure the spoil. A Saxon bishop was expelled from the see of London to make room for a Norman. Another Norman, Oddo by name, had the earldom of the western counties, the region that had been West Wales in the past, bestowed on him. Harold's earldom of East Anglia was given to the son of one of the King's chief supporters, Leofric of Mercia.

XXX.

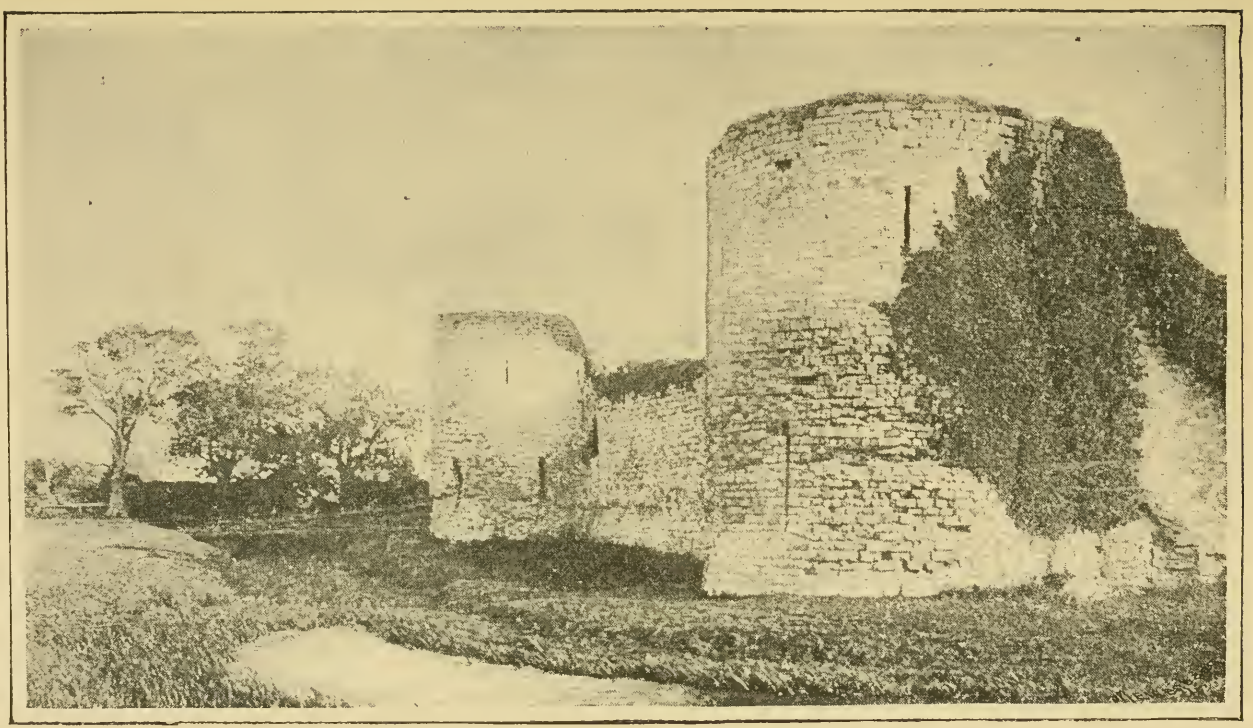
THE SUPREMACY OF HAROLD.

THE banishment of Godwin and his family did not last very long. A great part of England, and that part the richest and most civilized, was strongly in favour of them. It was only by the help of the northern earls that the King had prevailed over them; and the northern earls could not always be at hand to support him against the people in the midst of whom he dwelt. Godwin petitioned to be allowed to return; Baldwin of Flanders and the King of France sent embassies on his behalf. Edward would not listen to them. He had his favourite Normans round him, and he knew that if Godwin returned he should have to part with many of them. Then Godwin tried force. Harold and Leofwine his brother sailed from Ireland, and landed in Somersetshire. A hasty levy of the country people was raised to meet them. Harold was victorious in the battle that followed, and as many as thirty thanes on the beaten side were slain. It was an unlucky affair, and could not have helped the cause of the Godwin family. Probably Harold had landed to collect provisions, and was compelled to fight in self-defence. Meanwhile Godwin had been trying the temper of the

people in South-eastern England, and had found it to be strongly in his favour. He then sailed westward to the Isle of Wight, where he was joined by Harold and Leofwine. They then turned eastward again with their united fleets, and sailed along the coast, enlisting followers as they went, and seizing the ships that they found in the Kentish harbours. Their next proceeding was to sail up the Thames as far as London. There he occupied the southern bank of the river, the northern being held by the King's fleet of fifty ships, and by a land army, numerous indeed, but not over zealous for its side.

Godwin was naturally anxious to avoid bloodshed. There had already been enough of that in Somersetshire. He sent a message to the King again asking for the restoration of the honours and possessions of his family. Again the King refused; but in London he had about him other men besides his Norman favourites, men who could read the signs of the times. Stigand, the mass priest, whom Canute had settled at Assandune,[1] and who was now Bishop of Winchester, was one of them. By their advice negotiations were opened, and hostages, the usual pledge of good faith in those days of violence, were given on both sides. The Normans saw that their cause was lost and hastened to escape. Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, William, Bishop of London, and others, cut their way through the crowd, fled to Walton-on-the-Naze (the shorter route through Kent was closed against them), and there "lighted on a crazy ship, and betook themselves at once over the sea."

[1] See p. 298.



PEVENSEY CASTLE. (*From a photograph.*)

(See page 367.)

There was now nothing to hinder Godwin's restoration. At a great assembly, held in London, he declared on oath his innocence of all the charges which had been brought against him. Then he was formally restored, and his earldom was given back to him, as was Harold's to him. The Queen was brought back from the nunnery to which she had been sent, and the King "gave her all that she before owned." "Archbishop Robert was without reserve declared an outlaw, and all the Frenchmen, because they had chiefly made discord between Earl Godwin and the King." Stigand, of Winchester, was promoted to the archbishopric, an irregular proceeding which we shall find afterwards to have been the cause of much trouble.

The great earl did not live long after his restoration. On the Monday in Easter week (April 12th) in the following year (1053) he was seized with sudden sickness as he sat at the King's table, and died on the Thursday following. It was a paralytic stroke, for, as the Chronicler describes the event, "he suddenly sank down by the King's footstool, deprived of all speech and power." Writers who favoured the cause of the Normans did not of course pass by this opportunity of maligning the great English champion. The story which they told of his death was this. The King's cupbearer, as he was offering the wine, slipped with one foot and recovered himself with the other. "Thus brother helps brother," cried Godwin. "Yes," cried the King, "and if you had not slain my brother Alfred, so would he have helped me." Then Godwin swore that he was innocent of

the Atheling's death. "If I had aught to do with it," he affirmed, "may this morsel of bread choke me." Thereupon the King blessed the bread, and Godwin was choked in attempting to swallow it. We may safely pronounce all this to be fiction.[1] Godwin was then more than sixty years old. He had had a stormy life, and nothing is more likely than that it should be brought to a sudden end by a stroke of this kind.

Harold succeeded his father in the Earldom of Wessex. His own earldom was bestowed on Ælfgar, son of Leofric. Not long after the family power was increased by the promotion of Tostig, the next brother, to the Earldom of Northumbria, vacant by the death of Siward the Strong.

Siward, not long before, had penetrated into Scotland, as far as Aberdeenshire and had there won a great victory over a combined force of Scots and Normans, under the Macbeth to whom Shakespeare has given so sinister a fame. The victory had cost him his son, Osbern, and his nephew and namesake, Siward the Younger. He received the tidings of his son's death with characteristic firmness. "Where is his death-wound?" he asked; when he heard that it was in front, he said, "I rejoice; no other death is worthy of my son or me." It was not, however, his own lot thus to pass away. A mortal sickness came upon him, and it seemed likely that he must die in his bed. This, at least, he could avoid. "I feel shame," he cried, "not to have fallen in one of the many

[1] Professor Freeman gives an interesting study of the growth of the legend ("History of the Norman Conquest," ii. 635–640).

battles that I have fought, and to have been preserved to die like a cow. Close me in my mail of proof, gird my sword on me, fit the helmet on my head, and put a shield in my left hand, and a gilded axe in my right, that I may die like a soldier."

Before Siward's death there had passed away another Englishman, not notable in himself, but who, had he lived, might have altered the course of English affairs. This was the Atheling Edward, son of Edmund Ironsides. He had lived in Hungary since the accession of Canute, and had married a niece of the Emperor Henry III.[1] He had come over with his wife and children. The hope that a successor to the throne might be found in this descendant of Alfred was disappointed, for Edward died suddenly in London. This was in 1057. The event cleared Harold's way to the crown; but no one has ventured to charge him with having had a hand in it. It was not the less a disaster to England, if indeed we ought to so describe one of the causes that led to the Norman Conquest.

In the following year (1058) Harold visited Rome, and obtained from Benedict the pall for Archbishop Stigand. Unfortunately, Benedict himself was an usurper, and was shortly afterwards expelled from the Chair of St. Peter's, so that Stigand's position was not permanently improved.

Several years may be now passed over, till we come to Harold's campaign against the Welsh in 1063. It will be convenient to give in this place a brief account of the relations between the Welsh and

[1] See p. 296.

their English neighbours during the thirteen years preceding the settlement that was now to be effected. In 1050 Griffith, King of North Wales, in conjunction with some marauders from Ireland, had crossed the Wye and defeated a force which Bishop Ealdred of Worcester had collected to meet them. In the year of Godwin's banishment Griffith had renewed his ravages, and had defeated with great loss a Norman force which issued from the Castle of Leominster to attack him. Three years afterwards he found an ally in Ælfgar, son of Leofric, of Mercia, who had been outlawed, and had raised a piratical force in Ireland. The two invaded Herefordshire, and were met by Radulf, the Norman earl of the West country. Radulf mounted his English troops on horseback. This was a kind of fighting to which they were not accustomed, and their lines were speedily broken. Whether they carried away their Norman and French comrades in their flight, or whether the latter were the first to leave their ground, we cannot say. Anyhow, the English army fled almost without striking a blow. Griffith and Ælfgar now entered Hereford and burnt both the city and the cathedral. They then returned to Wales with a great quantity of booty and long trains of prisoners. Harold meanwhile had collected an army and followed the enemy into their own country. Griffith retired into South Wales.

The year following, though he had lost Ælfgar, who had meanwhile been restored to his earldom, he again invaded England, and was again successful. This time he met and vanquished Leofgar, the newly-appointed Bishop of Hereford, who had put himself

at the head of the English forces. The end of this campaign was a peace, Griffith swearing to yield henceforth a peaceful homage to King Edward.

The peace was soon broken. In 1058 Ælfgar was again banished, again allied himself to Griffith (who seems to have married his daughter), and again recovered his earldom by his help.

In 1063 Harold resolved to put an end to these troublesome incursions. To do this he felt that he must carry the war into the enemy's country. He equipped his men in a way that would make them a better match in speed and agility for the nimble mountaineers. They carried light spears ; their helmets and corslets were of leather. Thus armed, they pursued the Welsh into the defiles and hollows of Snowdon. Harold made his way through Wales to Bristol, where he took ship and sailed round the coast, Earl Tostig meanwhile ravaging the country with his cavalry. The Welsh were thoroughly cowed. Griffith escaped for the time, but the next year was murdered by his subjects, who sent his head and the beak of his ship to the English king. His half-brothers were appointed sub-kings of Wales in his place.

It is probably to the year after the death of Griffith, *i.e.*, to 1064, that we must assign a strange incident, itself, it would seem, the result of the merest chance, if there be such a thing as chance, which had yet a strong influence on the after-fortunes of Harold and of England. Of this incident more than one version is given ; indeed, it is assigned to more than one time. I feel safe in following the preference which Professor Freeman has given to the story that follows.

WILLIAM OF NORMANDY.

Harold, then, it seems, sometime in the latter part of this year, set out on what we should call a yachting trip in the English Channel. He had three ships with him, and carried dogs and hawks for purposes of sport. Bad weather drove him to the coast of Ponthieu, and on that coast he seems to have been wrecked. A fisherman, who happened to know him by sight, hastened to Count Guy, and offered for twenty pounds to show him a prisoner who would be willing to pay a hundred pounds for his ransom. The Count rode to the coast, ordered Harold to be seized, and carried him to one of his inland fortresses. But one of his attendants contrived to escape, and making his way to Count William of Normandy at his palace in Rouen, told him how Count Guy had inhospitably seized his master. William, we may be sure, was not sorry to hear of what had happened, and had no doubt what was to be done at once, whatever might follow afterwards. A messenger was despatched in hot haste to Guy, to demand, with threats, if necessary, the liberation of this prisoner. This was a request to which Guy, inspired, as were the rest of William's neighbours, with no little awe of his power, at once yielded. He took his prisoner out of his dungeon, and rode with him to En, where he met the Duke. His prompt obedience was handsomely rewarded. As for Harold, he soon found that he had to pay a price for his liberty much heavier than any ransom which Count Guy could have thought of extorting.

For a time the Duke seemed to think of nothing but doing his guest all the honours that he could think

of. Tournaments were held to amuse him. He lived on the most friendly terms with the Duke's family. It is even said that he was engaged to marry one of the Duke's daughters, then, it is true, young children, and that he promised to give his sister Elgiva in marriage to a Norman noble. He received knighthood at the hands of his host, and accompanied him on an expedition against the men of Brittany. It was on his return from this war that the Englishman found that he had to pay the price for all these pleasures. Something more than his own marriage to a Norman princess, or the giving of his sister to a Norman, was asked of him. He was to become "Duke William's man," to acknowledge him as Edward's heir in the kingdom of England, and to look after his interests as long as Edward lived. Other things, too, that have a quite impossible look, such as the immediate surrender of Dover Castle, are said to have been demanded.

Harold had no choice but to yield. He was virtually a prisoner, however comfortable his prison, and there were no means of escape. Accordingly he made the promises demanded, and confirmed them with an oath. And here comes in the strangest part of this strange story. A common oath would not be enough. Some unusual sanction must be added which would make perjury too dreadful a crime to be thought of. This addition William cunningly contrived to make without Harold's knowledge. The Englishman swore, as he thought, a simple oath on the Gospels. But the Gospels rested on a chest which had been filled with the relics of saints, the holiest

that the Duke could find in all the land of Normandy. It is said that Harold turned pale and trembled when he saw what he had unknowingly done.

This is the story. All its details are uncertain; some of them may very likely be untrue. But we may be sure that there is some foundation for it, and that this voyage of Harold, with all its consequences, was one of the most disastrous incidents of his life. It gave Duke William another claim, and one of which we in these days can scarcely comprehend the force, to succeed to the English crown.

And now there happened another disaster, which was to have its share in working out the tragedy of Harold's life. It was a disaster to which various causes had been leading up for several years, and which had now come to its fulfilment.

It will be remembered that Tostig had been appointed to succeed Siward in the Earldom of Northumbria, Waltheof, Siward's surviving son, being put aside as too young for the post. It was an unfortunate appointment, perhaps forced upon Harold, who could hardly pass over his brother, but possibly a part of the policy of family aggrandisement which Godwin had carried out with so little scruple. Or, again, it may have been due to the partiality of the King, who is known to have had a great liking for the young earl. It was a dangerous experiment to put a pure bred Englishman from the South to administer the affairs of a half-Danish earldom, and a wiser man than Tostig might easily have failed in the task. Unfortunately Tostig was not wise. He may have meant to govern well, but he did not go the right way

to work. He was impatient of opposition, wanting in sympathy, and ready to use violence when his will was thwarted. And his favour at Court took him away from his duties. When at home he was harsh and exacting, and when absent he left his territories to take care of themselves.[1]

The crisis came in 1065, when two Northumbrian nobles were murdered by Tostig's orders, one of them at the royal court (of his death Queen Edgiva is said to have been guilty), the other in his own chamber at York. The Northumbrians rose against the earl, slaughtered a number of his house carles and retainers, deposed him, and chose Morcar, son of Ælfgar, to be earl in his stead. Harold had a meeting with the insurgents at Oxford. He heard their complaints, was satisfied, it would seem, of their justice, and undertook to support them before the King. Edward was at first eager to restore his favourite by force of arms. But his counsellors were against him, and at last he yielded to their advice. Tostig was formally deprived of his earldom and banished. He fled to Baldwin, Count of Flanders, and forthwith began to form plans for revenge. We cannot doubt that Harold had done his duty to his fellow countrymen and his king; but he had made an enemy, and an enemy, as we shall see, of the most dangerous kind.

[1] They were invaded by Malcolm of Scotland on two occasions (1059, 1061).

XXXI.

WILLIAM OF NORMANDY.

I HAVE had occasion, more than once, to speak of William of Normandy. It now becomes necessary to say something about him, to state briefly who he was and what was his position. To estimate his character as a ruler, and to describe what harm, what good he did to this country does not fall within my province as the writer of the "Story of Early England."

William was born in the year 1028. His father was Robert, then Count of the Hiesmois, but very shortly to become, by the death of Richard the Good, Duke of Normandy. His mother was a certain Arletta or Herleva, daughter of Fulbert, the tanner of Falaise. Marriage there could not be between the Duke of Normandy and the daughter of a mechanic, but Robert was faithful to the woman whom he had loved as long as he lived. After his death Herleva married a Norman gentleman of good repute. The child, even before his birth, was marked out, it was said, by his mother's dreams, for future greatness. As soon as he saw the light, he gave a proof of his vigour, seizing the straw with which, it is interesting

to find, the ducal chamber was carpeted, with a sturdy grasp. Duke Robert lost no time in securing for the child the succession to his crown Kinsmen he had ; but there were objections to all of them. The nearest heir was his uncle, Robert, Archbishop of Rouen ; but then a Churchman could hardly succeed to the dukedom. Others were related only on the mother's side. Others, again, was of doubtful birth, scarcely more entitled to be called legitimate than the infant William himself. Such were the circumstances of the case, and they made Duke Robert's scheme, unlikely as it seemed, possible of achievement. He seems to have worked at it for several years doing what he could to win over his nobles to accept it. At length, when the boy was six or seven years old, he announced it to an assembly of notables. He was himself going, he said, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a perilous journey, from which it was probable that he might never return. It was necessary, before he started, to settle the question of his succession. To the sensible advice of his subjects that he should stop at home, and do his duty in governing his dukedom, he returned a resolute refusal. Then he produced the boy, one of their own stock, he said, who would soon mend, if God pleased, of the fault of youth.[1] The Norman nobles were in a strait. They could not keep the duke at home if he was minded to go, and it was perfectly true that the succession must be settled before he started. Then there was no other candi-

[1] "Il est peti, mais il creistra,
E, se Deu plaist, amendera,"
are the words which the story-teller puts into his mouth.

date upon whom they could agree. Under these circumstances they took what was the easiest and pleasantest course, and accepted the boy William as the heir of the dukedom. He was taken to Paris, and there swore fealty to the King. Duke Robert set out on his pilgrimage, reached Jerusalem, and died on his return at Nicæa.[1]

In 1035, then, William, then seven years old, succeeded to the rule of about as turbulent a people as was to be found in the world. He had guardians and counsellors, among whom were some of his kinsmen, and, it may be said, of the claimants to his throne. The chief was Alan of Brittany; others were his cousins, Osbern and Gilbert. This guardianship was no enviable post. Alan was poisoned while he was besieging a rebel castle; Gilbert was murdered by assassins hired by a relative of his own; and Osbern was killed in William's own chamber. This time it was the duke himself whose life was sought, and Osbern was killed in defending him.

There is no need to follow in detail the events of the following years. Enough has been said to show what kind of education it was that the young William received, how very hard was the school of life in which he was brought up, what a wonderful training in courage, readiness, promptitude of resource it must have given to any pupil who was hardy enough to survive it. William did survive it, and it fitted him for the part which he had afterwards to play.

He was just twenty years old when he ran his

[1] Nicæa, now Isnik, in Bithynia, famous as the place where the first General Council was held (318 B.C.).

greatest risk of losing both life and throne. All the Norman nobles, it may be said, conspired to overthrow him, not with the notion of setting up any other duke in his place, but in the hope of setting up each a little sovereignty of his own, where he might oppress his weak neighbours to his heart's content. The first thing to be done was, if possible, to seize William himself. He happened to be on a hunting expedition at Valognes, a little town in the peninsula now called La Manche, and therefore far away from his home. One night he was roused from his sleep with the warning that he must rise at once, and fly for his life. The duke threw himself on his horse and rode all that night. In the morning he reached the house of a faithful vassal, who gave him a fresh horse and the escort of his own sons. Thus he reached Falaise in safety.

Though the common people were favourable to the duke, as indeed they might well be with the prospect of a number of petty tyrants before them, he was obliged to look abroad for help, and he looked to his liege lord, Henry of France. The King at once granted his petition for help, and marched with his army to join the loyal Normans. It was at Val-ès-Dunes, near Caen, that the opposing forces met. It was William's first battle, and he bore himself in it with all the courage that distinguished him through life; nor did he fail to show that great physical strength which we shall see displayed hereafter in a greater fight. The King too, on his part, did his duty as a warrior, though he was twice unhorsed. After a fierce resistance the rebels were overthrown. Their loss on the field

of battle was great, and their loss in the flight still greater. William was now undisputed master of Normandy. One of his first acts was to require from his turbulent nobles the destruction of the castles which they had built during the period of anarchy, and which were the signs of the lawless independence that they so coveted.

Master of his own inheritance, William now began to turn his thoughts to a richer possession which he began to hope might be his. The crown of England was not without heir; but there was no heir present before the eyes of men. The last direct male descendant of Alfred [1] was living in a distant country. If there were other claimants they had no great thought either of legal right or of popular favour to urge on their own behalf. If the house of Godwin thought of the succession as a thing that might come to them, why might he not so think of it?

It was therefore appropriately enough during the exile of Godwin and his sons (1051–1052), that William paid a visit to the English king. What passed between the two on that occasion can never be known. But there is a general consent that some sort of promise was made by Edward that William should have the succession to his kingdom.

But it was necessary, or at least expedient, to have some kind of personal right. This was a difficult, it may be said, an impossible, thing to acquire. Still some kind of pretence might be invented. A claim on the score of birth was impossible. Even had William been the legitimate child of his father, there

[1] The Atheling Edward, son of Edmund Ironsides.

was no blood relationship between Duke Robert and the royal house of England. But what could not come by birth might be obtained by marriage. And it seems very likely that William did think of this possibility in choosing the lady whom he would seek in marriage.

We have heard more than once of Baldwin of Flanders as a prince, with whom unsuccessful pretenders found it convenient to take refuge. It was Baldwin's daughter Matilda whom William determined to make his wife.

The lady had, it seems, been married before, and had borne two children to her former husband. But she was exceedingly beautiful, if her traditionary portrait and the glowing language of contemporaries can be trusted. And she had the advantage of being descended from Alfred through his daughter, the wife of Baldwin II. of Flanders.

The difficulties that William had to overcome in prosecuting his courtship were great. There was, it would seem, aversion on the part of the lady, aversion which, according to one account, the suitor overcame by the strange method of making his way into her father's palace, seizing her by the hair as she sat in her mother's chamber, and, after repeated blows, throwing her on the ground. "He must be a man of great courage," Matilda is reported to have said, "who could dare to beat me in my own father's palace," when she was asked why she had afterwards consented to a suit which she had at first scornfully refused.

Another difficulty was of a legal kind. What it

was we cannot pretend to say with any certainty. It is impossible to believe that Matilda's first husband was still alive. On the other hand, it seems equally impossible to make out clearly any relationship between the two lovers that would have brought their marriage within the prohibited degrees. But, whatever the difficulties were, they were serious enough to delay the marriage for nearly four years. The courtship began in 1048, but the marriage did not take place till 1051. It was expressly forbidden at the time when it was first proposed by the Council of Rheims. Even when it was actually celebrated it was held to be irregular by the authorities of the Church ; and it was not till six or seven years afterwards that Pope Nicholas II. yielded, not without reluctance, to the petition of William's chosen advocate, Lanfranc,[1] and granted the dispensation which was to take away from it all defect.

Such, then, was Harold's great rival. His claims or hopes were Edward's promise, Harold's own oath, and the relationship of his wife to the royal house. His chief support lay in the Norman influence which the King during all his reign had so busily promoted.

[1] Afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.

XXXII.

THE ACCESSION OF HAROLD AND THE CAMPAIGN IN THE NORTH.

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR was now drawing near to his end. The vexation which he felt at the banishment of Tostig is said to have aggravated his sickness ; but whatever the cause, it was now evident that he had not long to live. On Christmas Day he appeared in public, wearing his crown, according to custom, but in the evening his strength gave way Still he rallied, and appeared, more than once, at the banquets with which the Christmas festival was held. On Innocents' Day (Wednesday, December 28, 1065) the great church which he had been building for many years, and on which he had spent, it was said, the tenth part of the wealth of the kingdom, was consecrated. The King was too weak to attend the ceremony ; when he heard that it was complete, he laid his head upon his pillow. Nor did he ever rise again from his bed. He grew weaker and weaker till, on the Tuesday in the following week (January 5, 1066), his speech failed him. Two days after came that common lighting up before

SEAL OF EDWARD THE CONFESSOR.

(*From the original in the British Museum.*)

death which is so common an experience. The King awoke from his sleep and spoke. There were present, Earl Harold, Archbishop Stigand, the Queen, who sat at the foot of the bed, warming her husband's feet in her bosom, and Robert, keeper of the palace. The dying man's words were at first words of warning, and he uttered them with such a fluency that, as his biographer says, a man in the strongest health could not have exceeded him. The warning was one of evil days to come upon the land which should not cease till a day in which "a green tree should be cut away from its trunk, and be carried away for the space of three acres from its root, and shall give itself to its trunk without the help of man." [1]

His warning or prophecy finished, he gave orders for his burial, asked for the prayers of the survivors for his soul, and specially thanked his wife for her loving care of him. Then the great question was put

[1] The prophecy was commonly interpreted to mean the succession of the race of Matilda of Scotland, granddaughter of Edmund Ironsides, in the person of Henry II. The "three acres" would be the reigns of Harold, William I., and William II. The tree would be joined by the marriage of Henry I. with Margaret, and would bear leaves in the children of that marriage. "The three acres" receive a most interesting explanation from Mr. Seebohm ("The English Village Community," p. 99): "It may be that the delirious King, 'as he sat up in bed,' dreamingly gazed through the window of his chamber upon the open fields and the turf balks dividing the acres. The green tree may have been suggested to his mind by an actual tree growing out of one of the balks. The uneven glass of his window-panes would be just as likely as not, as he rose in his bed, to sever the stem from the root to his eye, moving it apparently three acres' breadth higher up the open field, restoring it again to its root, as he sank back on his pillow." Thus the difficulty which former writers have felt of taking "three acres, *tria jugera*," as a measure of length is avoided. The acres are regular strips of land in the common or field.

to him, To whom did he leave his kingdom? His answer was, "stretching out his hand to his aforesaid brother Harold, 'I commend her [the Queen] with the whole realm to thy protection.'" After a few more words, among them being the strict injunction that his death should not be concealed from the people (lest he should lose the benefit of their immediate prayers), he received the communion, and so passed away.

The King's death had been so confidently expected, and the situation was one of such urgency, that the Great Assembly of the kingdom was actually sitting on this same fifth day of January. There seems to have been little hesitation in their action. William of Malmesbury indeed writes, "England was doubtfully inclined, not knowing to what ruler she should commit herself, whether to Harold, or William, or Edgar." But he continues, "all openly blessed Harold." And it was on Harold that their choice fell. His brothers, Gurth and Leofwine, were selected to be the bearers of the offer of the crown. It was an offer which he could not accept without misgivings, foremost among them being his oath to William—but which he could not refuse.

The next day, the feast of the Epiphany (January 6th), came the two ceremonies of the burial of Edward and the coronation of Harold. Archbishop Stigand had no part in either of them. Who officiated when the corpse of the Confessor was laid in the grave matters little, but it is important to note that it was Ealdred, the Northumbrian Primate, who put the crown on Harold's head. He asked in a loud voice

of the English people whether they chose Earl Harold for their king. A great shout of assent was the answer. Then Harold swore that he would observe the laws of the kingdom. Then, with solemn prayers, came the ceremonies of the anointing, the placing of the sword in the hand, the putting of the crown upon the head, and then the presentation of the sceptre and the rod with the Holy Dove. Thus, with all the ancient solemnities, Harold was made King of England.

There were two men to whom this event was most unwelcome. One was William of Normandy; the other Harold's brother Tostig, the banished Earl of Northumbria. Of the former I shall speak hereafter. But the story of Tostig may as well be finished now. It is possible that he had expected to be restored, but it could hardly have been through any help of Harold. Without Harold's interference, he felt, his banishment would never have been decreed. Now that this enemy, as he had doubtless learnt to think of his brother, was on the throne, all hopes of a peaceable return must be given up. He lost little time in setting to work. The Chronicle speaks of a great comet which was seen on April 24th, and for six nights after.[1] It goes on: "Shortly after Earl Tostig came from beyond sea into Wight, with as large a fleet as he could get." It says nothing of how he got this fleet together, or of who helped him. There is some reason for thinking that it was William of Normandy. "He did harm by the sea coast wherever he went," and so came to Sandwich. But

[1] Another form gives April 18.h.

Sandwich was not a safe place for him, as the preparations which Harold had been making against William could easily be turned against him. Accordingly he sailed northwards, entered the Humber, and ravaged its southern or Lincolnshire shore. Earls Edwin and Morcar collected their levies, attacked him and drove him away. Then his movements become somewhat obscure. According to one account, "he went to Scotland, and the king of Scotland gave him an asylum, and aided him with provisions, and he abode there all the summer." And then in September we find him joined with Harold Hardrada of Norway. The long stay in Scotland seems improbable. He must have soon begun to look for a more powerful ally than he had yet found, and to have seen one in the house of a king whom he must have visited hardly later than midsummer, if we are to allow anything like sufficient time for the vast preparations of which we afterwards hear. It is possible indeed that the Norwegian king had already made or at least begun these preparations, and that Tostig's arrival only served to support immediate action, and perhaps the way in which that action should be taken.

Harold Hardrada was a notable man. He was the half-brother of Olaf the Saint, and we hear of him fighting by his side in the fatal field of Vaerdalen. From that time there was no more famous champion. His huge stature, his dauntless courage, his singular skill in arms, combined to make him the first of the Northmen of his day. When the triumph of the foes of his family drove him from home he went eastward

and served in the bodyguard of the Emperor of Constantinople. Then he came back and reigned in Norway together with his nephew, Magnus the Good. His nephew's death left him sole ruler of his kingdom, and now he planned what should be the greatest achievement of his life, to do what Canute had done before him, and make himself King of England.

Leaving alone the difficulties that surround the earlier part of the story, I shall pass on to tell how the expedition fared. Early in September it reached Scarborough. After a sharp conflict with the inhabitants, the town was taken and burnt. Still sailing southward, and ravaging the coast as they went, they came to the mouth of the Humber. They sailed up this estuary, and then again up the Ouse, till they reached a spot, now known as Riccall,[1] a few miles from Selby. Here the ships were left under a strong guard, while the King and Tostig marched against York. Meanwhile the northern earls had been raising their levies, and they now advanced to attack the invaders. The armies met at a place called Fulford, then about two miles from York, but now partly included in that city. The battle was fiercely contested. At first it went in favour of the English, whose left wing broke through the Norwegian right. Then Harold the King charged in person, and carried all before him. The English fled before him, leaving many dead on the field, among whom was a notable number of ecclesiastics, and losing still more in the flight.

[1] The entrenchments made by the Northmen are still to be seen in the neighbourhood of this village.

The battle of Fulford was fought on September 20th. On the 24th York surrendered. But Harold did not remain in that city. He removed his quarters nine miles north-east to Stamford Bridge, and then awaited the arrival of the hostages who were to assure him of the fidelity of the county. For Yorkshire had promised by its representatives assembled in its chief city that it would obey Harold as King of England, and would help him to subdue the rest of the land.

Meanwhile the English Harold was hastening northwards. He had been watching, as will be told hereafter, the southern coast, to guard against the invasion of William ; but here was a pressing call for help which could not be neglected. As he went, the men of the shires through which he passed joined him ; on the day of the surrender of York he reached Todcaster, a spot about as far from that city on the south-east as Stamford Bridge is on the north-east. The next morning he entered York, and was received with enthusiasm. But he did not stay to rest. He marched out at once to do battle with the invaders.

According to all accounts he surprised them. The Norse saga describes how Harold Hardrada and his allies were riding into York to make arrangements for the business of government when they came suddenly on the English army.[1] English writers give us to

[1] The Norse story is too picturesque to be lost ; and there may be genuine details in it. It runs thus. The Norwegian king rode into York to hold his court, Earl Tostig with him. As they went, they saw a cloud of dust, from under which soon appeared the glittering spears of the English host. Tostig is for falling back on their ships (which were, it must be remembered, far away on the other side of York) ; but the King will face the foe. He sends a messenger to the ships, and

understand that the Norwegians were found unprepared in their camp, which seems to have occupied both sides of the Derwent. It was, of course, the division that occupied the right bank on which Harold and his advance first fell. The confusion was terrible; the Northmen were driven across the stream, which was so choked with corpses that the living passed over on the bodies of the dead. The bridge that spanned the river was held by a single champion, who, for a time, kept the whole English army at bay, and was not dislodged till an Englishman crept under the timbers, and pierced him from below. Meanwhile Hardrada had had time to form his host in battle array. Then came the final struggle. Of its details we know nothing, though we may imagine much. Doubtless it was not much unlike the great fight

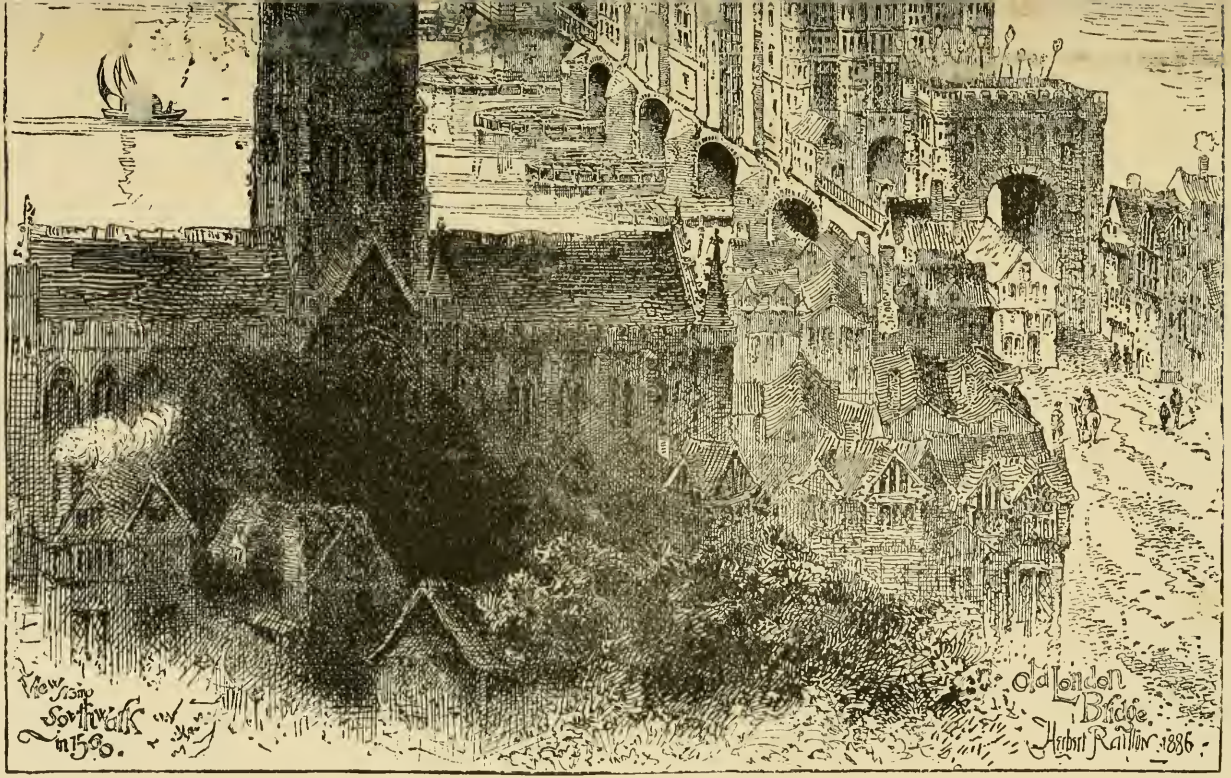
marshals his army for battle, making a great circle with the banner of his house in the midst. As he rides round the wall of shields his horse stumbles. He falls to the ground. To his own men he makes light of the omen; but to the English king, interpreting it by contraries, it augurs well. "Who is that, the tall man who fell from his horse?" he asks of his followers. And when he hears that it is the Norwegian king, "A goodly man," he answers, "but his fall is approaching." Then comes the attempt to make terms of peace. The two Harolds and Tostig meet. "What will you give me?" asks the banished earl of his brother the king. "Your earldom; nay more, even a third of my kingdom." "And what shall the king of Norway have?" "Seven feet of earth for a grave, or so much more as he is taller than other men." Tostig turns away, for he cannot desert his ally. When Harold Hardrada learns that it is the English king with whom they had been talking, he blames Tostig for letting him depart unhamed. Then comes the battle. The wall of shields is unbroken till it breaks itself to pursue the beaten foe. In the confusion King Harold falls, pierced in the throat by an arrow. Then Tostig takes up the fight till he also is smitten. Finally, the men from the ships come up, and the battle begins again more fiercely than ever. At nightfall, after a desperate conflict, the English have won a great victory.

which I shall attempt to describe in the following chapter. There was the ring, hedged about with the wall of shields, and the assailants plying upon it sword and battle-axe. Only the parts are changed. At Stamford Bridge the English attack, at Senlac they stand on their defence. They lose the later, as they win the earlier fight.

What is certain is that the Norwegian host was utterly broken. "Three kings were slain," says the Chronicler, meaning Harold, Tostig, and an Irish prince who had joined their alliance, in the hope of getting some share of English plunder. As for their followers, few seem to have left the field of Stamford Bridge alive. But those who had been left with the fleet fared better. Harold offered them peace. They came to York, gave him hostages, and swore a great oath that they would keep the peace with England thereafter. Then they sailed away, carrying with them, according to one account, the body of Harold Hardrada for burial in his native land.

The English king had much to do in settling the affairs of the North, and he had also to give his army some rest. He was still at York when a swift messenger brought the news that William of Normandy had landed on the southern coast. He heard the tidings, not as he sat at the banquet on the evening of the day of Stamford Bridge, but, as we may guess, about seven days after. He turned at once to meet this new and more dangerous foe.[1]

[1] The battle of Stamford Bridge was fought on September 25th. William landed on September 28th. The fleetest messenger could hardly have traversed the two hundred miles that lie between the south coast and York in less than four days.



LONDON BRIDGE IN 1560.

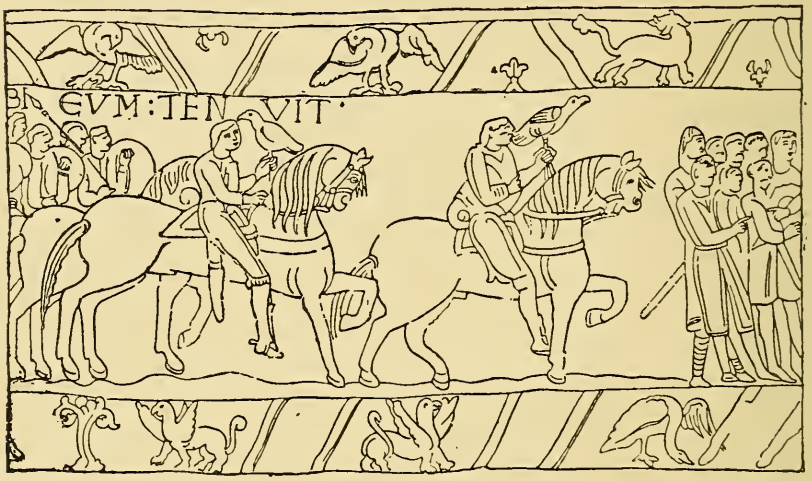
XXXIII.

THE LAST STRUGGLE.

My story must now go back to the early days of the year 1066. It was not long before William heard the news of Edward's death and Harold's accession. The tidings came to him as he was setting out for a day's hunting. He turned back at once on hearing them, but said nothing, nor did any man dare to speak to him. Then he went to his palace at Rouen, and sat deep in thought, with his face covered. He must have been long expecting such news. Edward's life he knew to be precarious, and he could not have doubted what Harold's hopes had been. But such things, whether expected or not, must always be a surprise; and he had to make up his mind at once. For years his thoughts had been bent on possessing himself of the crown of England; and now the time was come for putting them. Whatever his confidence, he could not take such news lightly.

The first step was, of course, to send an embassy to Harold with a formal claim of the crown. We do not know the precise terms of the message, but we can easily imagine them. William must have called upon Harold to fulfil the promises which he had made, or,

at least, some of them. By rights he ought to yield up the kingdom. Failing to do that, let him at least marry the duke's daughter, to whom he had been contracted in time past, and give his own sister in marriage to a Norman noble. Harold's answer is variously reported, but here, too, we may supply it for ourselves. The kingdom was not his to surrender ; it had been given to him by the English people. That



HAWKING.

(*From the Bayeaux Tapestry.*)

people, too, would have something to say about his marriage. Their pleasure was that an English king should take an English wife. As for his sister, she was dead.

William did not expect to have any other answer. His demands had been made as a matter of form, and with the object of putting his adversary in the wrong. This done, he set about preparing for the great enterprise of the conquest of England. The first thing

was to obtain the assent of his barons. Here he had much to help him, though there were difficulties to overcome. The thirty years that had passed since he had succeeded—a child of seven—to his father's dukedom had impressed the Normans with a strong sense of his extraordinary ability and courage. If there was any leader under whom they would venture to undertake so perilous an enterprise as the conquest of England, it was their Duke William. But perilous it was, more perilous than any that had been attempted within the memory of man. Then, on the other hand, if the peril was great, great also would be the rewards. On the whole, therefore, there was much division of feeling. When William held an assembly of his nobles he could not get indeed a general assent to his plan, but he got many promises of support. The barons, though they were not bound to serve beyond the sea, would follow his banner, and would even bring with them twice the numbers which they could legally be called upon to furnish.

Then he looked for help outside the borders of his own duchy, looked for help both moral and material. He had some success in obtaining both. Philip of France would not help him, nor would Baldwin of Flanders. But Eustace of Boulogne was glad to pay off an old grudge against Harold, besides the getting a share in that English plunder of which he had before been permitted to get only the merest taste. A more important ally was the Pope. An embassy to Rome laid before Alexander III., who was the reigning pontiff of the time, his claims and his wrongs.

SHIP-BUILDING.

(*From the Bayeaux Tapestry.*)

Alexander sent his blessing and a consecrated banner, which must have been a promise of victory to the Normans, a people strongly impressed with a sense of religion, though not, it would seem, much influenced by it in the conduct of life.

As for men there was no want of them. Volunteers thronged in even from the territories of princes who gave no public favour to the enterprise—from Brittany, where a war with the English would be popular; from Flanders, the native country of the Duchess Matilda; from France; and even, it is said, from those parts of Southern Europe in which a Norman population had settled.

The ships which were to carry over this multitude of men were given by the Norman nobles and bishops. The number of them, as well as the number of the host, has been variously reckoned. If we reckon the latter as something between fifty and sixty thousand men, we may be sure that there must have been a mighty fleet to carry them, not the three thousand perhaps, of one account, but certainly more than the five hundred and ninety-six of another.[1]

The vast armament thus gathered together had its rendezvous a few miles to the west of Havre, not far from what is now the well-known watering-place of Trouville. It assembled about the middle of August. There it lay for a month, waiting in vain for the south wind that was to carry it safely to the opposite shore. Meanwhile the mixed multitude was kept under the

[1] The combined force of French and English landed in the Crimea in the autumn of 1854 required more than a thousand ships for its transport. It numbered about fifty thousand men.

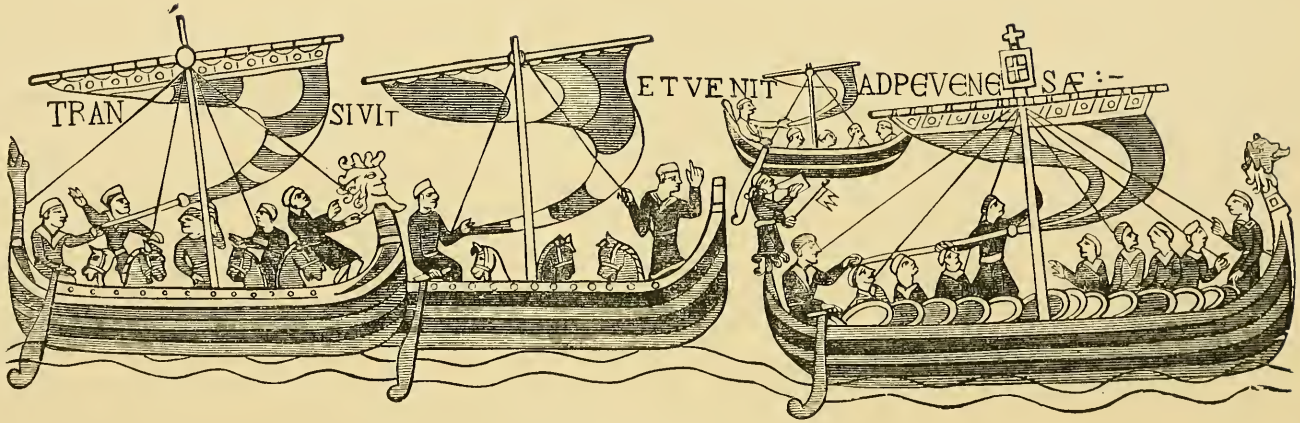
strictest discipline. William set his face sternly against all plundering. That was to be reserved for the land to which they were going.

About the middle of September the duke changed his position some seventy miles eastward to the mouth of the Somme, a position in which he was much nearer to the English coast. This delay must have weakened his force, but it had more than compensation in the damage which it did to the resources of Harold. The English king had gathered a vast levy of men, and collected a powerful fleet for the protection of the coast. But he could not keep them together. His soldiers were not mercenaries supported by pay, and ready to endure no little privation in the hope of future plunder. They were a levy of native Englishmen, who had their harvests to gather in. Harold, in consequence, could not keep his men together many days after the beginning of September. He had to disband his army, while his fleet returned to London, not without suffering loss on their way. If the south wind which William had waited for so impatiently had come sooner, before Harold's army was broken up, and before the Norwegian king, with the traitor Tostig, had made their fatal diversion in the north, it might have carried him not to victory, but to defeat.

For fourteen or fifteen days William was compelled to tarry in his new quarters. Then on the 27th of September the long-wished for south wind began to blow. The great host embarked in hot haste, the duke himself urging them to do their work with all the speed they might. It was dark before the start

was made. Every ship bore a light, and the duke's own vessel, the gift of his wife, Matilda, was marked out from the rest as that which all were to follow by the huge lantern that it bore. Nothing hindered the passage. The wind blew softly and steadily from the same quarter, and William, like Cæsar eleven hundred years before, crossed the strait which has more than once baffled invaders, without suffering any loss. At nine o'clock in the morning of September 28th he landed on the English coast. The place was then known as Andredes-ceaster, the Anderida of Roman times. It now bears the name of Pevensey. Its character has changed as has its name. The shallow water of the sea would now offer a serious obstacle to the landing of an army. In those days the sea covered ground which is now one of the richest pastures of England, and could bear ships of no small burden up to the walls of the old Roman town. William probably expected resistance, but he found none. There was neither army nor fleet to hinder his landing, and he took undisturbed possession of his future inheritance. One incident that seemed at first to angur ill for his success troubled the minds of his followers. He was the first man to disembark, and as he stepped from his ship, he fell. A groan of dismay went up from all who saw it. "By the splendour of God"—this was the duke's favourite oath—"I have taken seizin of my kingdom, for the earth of England is in my hands."

But England was not long left without defenders. Harold, we have seen, had heard the news of the landing of the Normans about the 1st of October.



SHIPS OF WAR.

(*From the Bayeaux Tapestry.*)

He hurried to London, probably taking his house-carles with him, but leaving the rest of his followers to follow as soon as they could. The defence of the South would have to be furnished in the main from the South itself, and London was its capital. We know, as a matter of fact, that the northern earldoms furnished none of the troops who did battle for their country at Senlac. We may suppose, then, he reached London in about the time which it had taken the messengers to travel from Pevensey to York. As he travelled he sent summonses to such of the shires as would be able and willing to send men to his levy. But London itself must have been the centre of his preparations for defence, and in London, according to one writer, "during six days he drew together an innumerable number of Englishmen." This would bring us to October 11th or 12th.

It was during this sojourn in London that, if indeed the story is true, Gurth prepared his plan for carrying on the campaign. This was that he and Leofwine should go and do battle with the Norman invaders. He was bound, he said, by no oaths to William, and could fight against him with a clear conscience. Harold should keep himself in reserve and collect fresh troops to resist the invaders should fortune go against him in the first battle. While its king remained unconquered, England could not be lost. Meanwhile he must lay waste the country between the coast and London, so as to leave the invaders no means of subsistence. Harold would have nothing to do with any such scheme. He would stand in the front, as it was his duty to stand, to defend his

country. Of the scruples about his oath he took no account. He would not lay waste the lands of Englishmen. We cannot doubt that in making this resolve he was right.

His hasty preparations completed, he left London, and on the 13th of October reached the position, doubtless decided on beforehand, where he had determined to await the approach of the Normans. This was the hill of Senlac, now known as Battle, one of the range of heights which rise about six miles to the north of Hastings, which place William had occupied after his landing at Pevensey. The night before the battle was spent, so the story runs (and it is told, we must remember, by writers in the Norman interest), by the Normans in prayer and devotion, by the English in noisy feasting.

On a height above the town of Hastings, from which the English encampment on Senlac hill was visible, William addressed his army, exhorted them to do their duty as men, and assured them of victory. Then he armed himself, turning the curious mischance by which his coat of mail was put on hindforemost into an omen of success. It portended, he said, that the duke should be turned into a king.

The left wing of the army was composed of men from Brittany and Poitou; the left of the French mercenaries and auxiliaries. In the centre was William himself with his Normans. Some heavy armed infantry he had; but the force in which he chiefly trusted was his cavalry, the valiant Norman knights, ranged, we are told, in five divisions. In the

front line was carried the Papal banner, pledge, it was believed, of certain victory. Before each division went the archers. It was their duty, after discharging their arrows, to retire on the infantry behind them. They had neither armour nor arms to fit them for close combat.

Harold, on the other hand, had spared no pains to fortify his post at Senlac hill. He guarded each approach with a triple palisade, in which there were three strongly-guarded openings. In the centre was the Royal Standard. By this the King and his brothers, Gurth and Leofwine, took their post, having round them the house-carles, the strength of the English army. The right and left of the array were occupied by the light-armed troops, hasty levies for the most part, and some of them very irregularly armed. The King himself and his followers had the battle-axe for their weapon.

At nine o'clock in the morning the battle was begun by the archers. They discharged their arrows, we are not told with what effect, and then retired. Then the whole army advanced to the attack. But before they closed a Norman minstrel, skilled for sleight of hand as well as for skill in song, rode forth in front of the array. He sang the song of Charlemagne and Roland, and of them who died fighting against the pagan foes at Roncesvalles, and as he sang he threw his sword into the air and caught it again. With reckless valour he rode up, it seems, to the very line of the English defence, struck down one man with his lance, and another with his sword, and then was in his turn struck dead upon the ground.

The heavy infantry began the serious attack. They had toiled through the marshy ground between the hills, and up the slope, on the top of which the English were posted. But when they came to the palisade, behind which stood the close array of English warriors, they could do nothing. All their valour could not win a way through it. Then William called his Norman horsemen, the flower of his nation, to the attack. They charged again and again, but even they could make no impression on the foe. The English had the advantage of the ground, and man for man they were superior in stature and strength.

All might have been well, but for that want of discipline which is the fatal fault of such hasty levies, and which so often makes success the beginning of disaster. The Breton troops of William turned and fled, and the English on the right charged forth from their defences, and pursued them. For a time all was panic and confusion in the Norman army ; the Norman knights themselves were borne back by the tide of fugitives. Then came the time for William's indomitable courage and constancy to show itself. With bare head he rode among the fugitives and rallied them to the attack. The Bretons turned, and, aided doubtless by the Norman cavalry, slaughtered their pursuers.

Then came the Conqueror's great effort. He rode up himself to the place where the Royal Standard stood, his brothers, Odo of Bayeaux, most valiant of Churchmen, and Robert, with him. His purpose was to come face to face with Harold himself ; but before

he could reach him, Gurth had aimed a spear which struck, not indeed the duke himself, but his horse. This did not stop him, he pressed on to the barricade, and with a mighty blow of his mace, almost as famous a weapon as Rustem's club, or Achilles' spear, he struck the English earl to the ground. Another blow from one of his Norman followers was fatal to Leofwine.

The death of the two brothers was a terrible loss to the English army; yet it stood firm. Here and there the assailants had succeeded in breaking down the palisade; but the array of warriors behind it still stood solid and firm. Then William had recourse to stratagem. He had seen how the flight of the Bretons had tempted the English forth from their defences, and he put the lesson into practice. The army was ordered to fall back. Again the undisciplined levies rushed forth to the pursuit; and again they were made to feel the fatal consequences of their rashness and disobedience, and, what was worse, the palisade was left undefended. This captured, the task of the English in holding their ground was made much harder. Still they held it. No shocks from the assailants could move the dense array in which Harold and his men stood close together, so close that even the dead could not fall to the ground, but remained upright among the living. Gallant deeds were done on both sides, and none bore themselves more bravely than the rival leaders. Never was a battle more like the great Homeric fight, when the chiefs turn by the prowess of their own hands the fortune of the day. But the end came at last, not

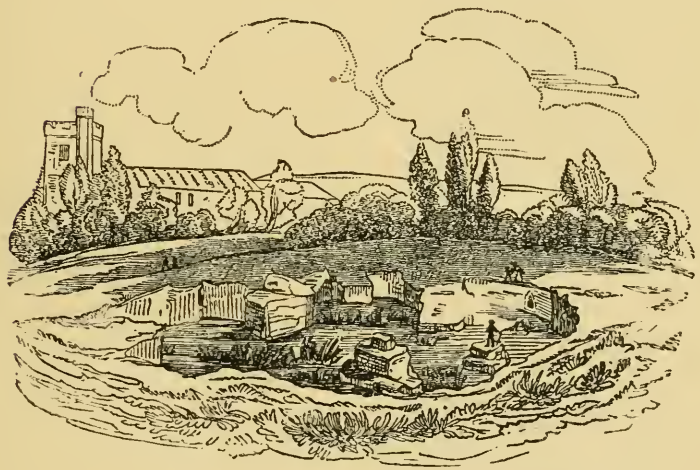
indeed till the sun was near the setting. William bade his archers [1] shoot a volley into the air. The descending arrows fell with fatal effect upon the English host, for one of them pierced Harold's eye as he stood in his place. He fell in his death struggle at the foot of the Royal Standard. Twenty Norman knights rushed to secure it; four hastened to despatch the still breathing king.

The battle was now virtually over, yet the English still resisted. The irregular levies fled from the ground, but not in such terror but that they could turn, when the occasion presented itself, and inflict a terrible loss upon their pursuers. But the King's own guard, the house-carles, fell where they stood, not a man leaving his place, not a man asking quarter. And with them fell many gallant Englishmen, who had come as volunteers to that fatal field Few of their names have been preserved. There was no "sacred bard" of their own race to preserve their fame. But whether laymen or Churchmen—for not a few tonsured corpses were found among the slain —they were worthy of their king.

The body of Harold, recognized by the woman whom he had loved in his youth and from whom he had been separated by reasons of State, was buried on the sea-shore, and afterwards, there is reason to believe, removed to the Abbey which he had founded at Waltham.

[1] We hear nothing of archers on the English side, famous as were these troops in our armies in after-days.

Thus ends the story of Early England. I leave to others to tell how the Norman used his conquest, and how, whether he wished it so or no, England remained England still.



FOUNDATION OF THE CHOIR OF BATTLE ABBEY AND SITE OF THE HIGH ALTAR.

(*Being the spot upon which Harold's Standard was planted.*)

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